

# Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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

January - February 2023

*President's Column*

## Onward into 2023

By Virginia Parker Staat



*Virginia with her beloved Roxanne.*

Happy New Year to you and yours!

As I write this, we are having the season's first hard freeze in Texas. Our streets are lined with tropical plants wrapped or draped in colorful sheets and beach towels and looking like enormous Christmas packages. It's our attempt to save the plants from freezing. It rarely works if the freeze lasts more than 24-hours.

I'm not much for cold weather, having lived the vast majority of my life along the Interstate 10 corridor. It often makes me wonder how those of you in cold country handle six feet of snow and those dark winter skies. Our Texas cold snap does, however, seem to be a fitting end to 2022.

It has been quite a year for RMOWP. Looking back on 2022, we enjoyed new places and opportunities together. Thankfully, we're meeting face-to-face again and had an excellent conference in Golden, Colorado. The photography and writings we've shared continue to show excellence in our respective crafts. We've expanded our RMOWP offerings by hosting our first Zoom program so we can stay better connected throughout the year.

We're looking towards a bright 2023. We'll be celebrating RMOWP's fiftieth anniversary this year. Our next conference will be held in Los Alamos, New Mexico, October 3-6. We're looking forward to new ideas, positive changes, and continuing to foster our commitment to the great outdoors.

I would like to thank each of you for your participation and commitment to RMOWP. David and I wish you a multitude of outdoor adventures, new opportunities, and new beginnings. Most of all, we wish each of you peace, joy, and a healthy 2023.

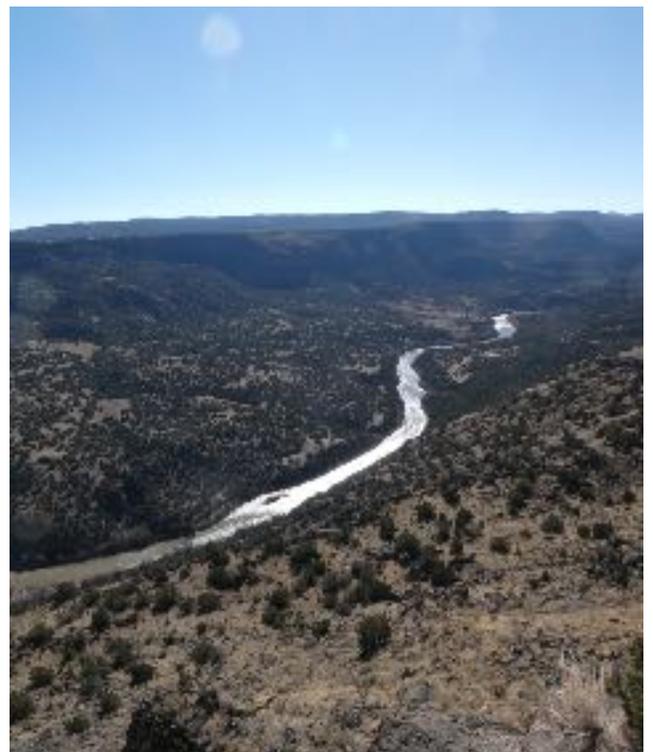


*Looking north-northwest toward Los Alamos*

### White Rock Overlook

With the Rio Grande at its feet flowing more easterly than southerly at this point, the Overlook should be a perfect spot for a sunrise photo shoot. It's about a 15 minute drive from downtown Los Alamos.

Photos © Don Laine



*An eastward view from the overlook.  
Picture this with the rising sun sending its first rays toward the Rio Grande...*



The Los Alamos County Sheriff's Posse Lodge - headquarters for RMOWP's 2023 conference, scheduled Tuesday-Friday October 3-6.

## Dues are Due

It's that time of year again. RMOWP Treasurer Maryann Gaug will be emailing your renewal notice around the middle of January. Watch for it!

## 26th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-20, 2023

Count birds in your backyard, local park, or wherever you spot a bird, and submit your observations on line at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org).



*Dark-eyed Junco.*  
Photo courtesy Macaulay Library

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## The Next Zoom

When: **Tuesday, February 21 at 7pm**

**Coordinator Steve Cochrane** will email those who've signed up, with the link to take part. **Maryann Gaug** will present a travelogue highlighting her 2021 trip to Greenland.

If you wish to be included simply contact Steve at [steve@stevecochranephotography.com](mailto:steve@stevecochranephotography.com) and he will add you to his list.

## Waterfalls and Voyageurs

Text & photos by Maryann Gaug

Driving down a forested hill, the ocean appeared reaching to the horizon. Wait! Not an ocean, but Lake Superior! I'd never seen this largest of the Great Lakes. Once on the main north-south highway along Minnesota's North Shore, my exploration started. I had with luck reserved five nights in three different state park campgrounds, giving me plenty of time to hike to waterfalls, past cascades, and to explore historic sites in between. My journey would cover 110 miles of Gichigami's shore, the Ojibwe tribe's name for the lake.

The forests contain varied trees and bushes, many new to



*Middle and Lower Gooseberry Falls*

me. Leaves were just starting to turn. Lava flows from 1.1 billion years ago combined with glacial scouring of the Great Lakes formed stair steps near the lake, creating perfect cliffs for waterfalls and cascades.

Hiking proved quite different than my favorite Colorado trails. I never walked up/down so many stairs, the best way to climb steep rocky cliffs. Gooseberry Falls, a triple decker cutting through forest, were laced with root beer-colored water, a result of humic acid from

trees decaying in the rivers. I enjoyed the picturesque trio despite my complaining legs.

Hidden Falls in Temperance River State Park hid in the shadowy depths of a gorge, barely visible from the trail. More stairs climbed above to where I looked into the narrow

gorge, tan water swirling around. My favorite was the Lower Cascade River Loop Trail, climbing up a trail with stairs in the steeper sections. Several waterfalls tumbled off cliffs, and the river cascaded down boulders through a small canyon. I really enjoyed walking through the forest, watching the water playfully splashing its way to the lake.



*Ojibwe birch bark lodge at Grand Portage National Monument*



*Pigeon Falls with rainbow*

No North Shore trip is complete without seeing 120-foot Pigeon Falls, Minnesota's highest, located in Grand Portage State Park. The Pigeon River forms the border between the US and Canada. The short paved trail included more stairs to reach the two overlooks. The sun came out as I arrived, the spray creating a beautiful rainbow, even more brilliant against the dark sky. The Visitor Center had excellent exhibits about the Ojibwe people then and now.

Heading back south, I stopped at Grand Portage National Monument, which documents Ojibwe life and focuses on the voyageurs who traded goods during a late June rendezvous. One type of voyageur traveled over the Great Lakes from Montreal in canoes laden with metal and other goods. The other type, hardy men who followed the inland trails and river paths of the even harder Ojibwe and other tribes, traded with tribes and returned with mainly beaver pelts. At Grand Portage, the two groups exchanged their goods, then the inland crew headed west with metal goods and the lakes crew took pelts back to Montreal. I enjoyed touring the recreated "fort" which gave a glimpse of life from 1784-1803.

Split Rock Lighthouse examined the dangers of Lake Superior. In November 1905, a bad storm sank or damaged 29 ships, sending many sailors to the icy depths. By 1910, this lighthouse had been built to prevent a future disaster. Without roads, they transported building materials by boat, then hauled them up the large cliff. Always amazes me what our forebears went through to live in less than friendly environments.



*Split Rock Lighthouse*

I thoroughly enjoyed my explorations of a sampling of Minnesota's North Shore, and my legs survived.



*Delicate Arch © Tom Ulrich  
1st Place, Members choice, 2006 contest*

Writer's Corner

## In a Flash

By Virginia Parker Staat

*"To write short nonfiction requires an alertness to detail, a quickening of the senses, a focusing of the literary lens, so to speak, until one has magnified some small aspect of what it means to be human." ~ Bernard Cooper*

How do we describe flash nonfiction? Author Carol Guess believes it is where compression meets passion. Lee Martin says it's all about voice. In his article *When Flash Nonfiction Strikes You*, Michael Cohen writes, "Flash creative nonfiction is somewhere between the lyricism of poetry and the narrative potential of prose."

Flash nonfiction is most often less than 500 words and short enough to fit on a single page. Others declare it to be between 17 and 120 words. James Johnson limits it to "six words, two commas, and a full stop." An example would be Ernest Hemingway's flash story: *For sale, Baby shoes. Never Worn.*

Compression is the goal of flash. There are no statements like "I remember" or setting scenes or plot building. In *The Field Guide to Writing Flash Nonfiction*, Dinty Moore explains, "the reader is not a hiker but a smoke jumper, one

of those brave firefighters who jump out of planes and land 30 yards from where the forest fire is burning. The writer starts the reader at that spot, at the edge of the fire, or as close as one can get without touching the actual flame. There is no time to walk in."

Flash is basically a micro essay, utilizing the same techniques and structures as in a longer piece. It is a story tightly knit with tangible sensory details in a single scene. In his article *On the Power of Essayistic Compression in Flash Nonfiction*, Dinty Moore writes, "Like poetry, flash often relies on the tiny detail, the single image, or some peculiarity of word choice or phrasing—small elements that carry a greater load than they might in a longer work."

Flash can be informative, persuasive, personal... or any other sub-genre you choose. The trick to writing flash is to set your tone immediately. In her article "*6 Essentials for Writing Flash Fiction and Nonfiction*," Gina Barreca explains, "in the flash form, you must select a tone and stick with it. This is a short ride. You can mix emotions—be amusing and nostalgic or hilarious and vicious—but you can't throw all the emotions you've ever had into the word-blender and hit "liquefy."

Barreca continues, "the process can feel like stuffing a size-10 foot into a size-8 shoe, wedging a full-size person into a clown car, or at the very least, holding your breath to get that belt to cinch in just. One. More. Notch."

And that's it... in a flash.



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*"A good photograph is knowing where to stand."  
~ American Photographer Ansel Adams  
(1902-1984)*

### 2023 CALENDAR

January-March ~ Dues are due.

Feb. 21 7pm ~ Zoom meeting

July 10 ~ Contest deadline

October 3-6 ~ Annual Conference in  
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Want this newsletter via e-mail?

Let us know: [info@rmowp.org](mailto:info@rmowp.org)

Subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!

## Hunting Season Has Begun

A book review by Virginia Staat

*“Welcome to my world, the world of a forager! It is a world filled with free, nutritious, and delicious fruits, flowers, roots, tubers, shoots, nuts, mushrooms, and foliage, all within walking distance of your front door. ~ Mark Vorderbruggen, Ph.D.*

They call him Merriwether. Friends dubbed him with the nickname in honor of the famous American explorer Meriwether Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is a fitting moniker. Merriwether is a research chemist with a M.S. in medicinal chemistry and a Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry. He is recognized as an expert in wild edibles and medicinal plants, having spent his life foraging and learning the correlation between foraged foods, their nutritional and medicinal values, and how to use them to optimize health. He holds sixteen patents and is a master gardener.

Merriwether, also known as Dr. Mark Vorderbruggen, recently published *Foraging: Explore Nature's Bounty and Turn your Foraged Finds into Flavorful Feasts* (2022, Outdoor Adventure Guides). The book is a goldmine of information for both novice and experienced foragers, covering seventy of the most common wild edibles found throughout North America.



As a young girl, I learned to forage for wild berries at my grandmother's side. Over the years I have often slathered prickly pear jelly on my toast and sprinkled sorrel flowers on salads. More recently I have become interested in learning about medicinal herbs and wild foods. To my surprise, I discovered that my home state of Texas has its own foraging guru: Dr. Mark “Merriwether” Vorderbruggen. I was first introduced to his website [foragingtexas.com](http://foragingtexas.com), where I learned to make beautyberry jelly. Soon after, I began a correspondence with him. After purchasing his book, David and I are signed up to take one of his foraging seminars in January. The best part is that when I walk through the woods now, I look at plants with an even greater sense of appreciation and curiosity.

Why would foraging be important to RMOWP members? Foraging information can be critical to outdoor writing. As an example, I have been dabbling with a story about the ancient Mimbres culture from the Gila Wilderness area of New Mexico. Learning about the plants that people ate to survive in that harsh environment is essential to the story's authenticity. As a photographer, I want to know the types of plants I am photographing. Whether the plant is edible or not adds to the photo's story. Additionally, with RMOWP's focus on stewardship and nurturing the great outdoors, increasing our knowledge about sustainable foraging can help us encourage others to do the same. Whenever we can deepen our connection to nature, it expands our appreciation of the bounty surrounding us and enriches our lives.

Merriwether's *Foraging* book is the perfect reference to learn about wild foods. The first section of his book details the basics of foraging, including regulations, ethics, safety, and the legality of foraging wild edibles. As an example, it is unlawful to forage in national parks and permission must be granted to harvest on most public lands. Sustainability is key to ethical foraging, and foragers should endeavor to leave ninety percent of a plant's concentration unless it is extremely prolific or invasive. The book offers general foraging techniques and the necessary tools. It also discusses how to avoid toxic environments and how to test for any allergic reactions you may have with your foraged finds.

The second section of *Foraging* details seventy wild plants found throughout North America, including amaranth, dandelion, lamb's quarter, mulberry, and wild violet. The edibles range from trees, to plants, to vines, to mushrooms, to lichen. Each highlighted specimen includes detailed photos of various plant parts, such as the flower, stem, leaf, and root. Each of the seventy wild edibles has a map indicating where they flourish, the best time of year to harvest, and the plant's favored growing location (i.e., forest, fields, or marshy areas). Additional information includes which plant parts should be harvested and how to prepare it for recipes. Finally, if the plant has a poisonous mimic, a photo of the imposter is provided, along with identifying differences.

The third section of *Foraging* includes thirty recipes for your foraged finds, from black nightshade tarts to pickled burdock roots to honeysuckle-infused sugar to wild mushroom quiche. Since my mycology identification skills are nil, I've begun by hunting loblolly and white pine needles this winter. Chopped and steeped in boiling water, the needles are high in Vitamin C and make an earthy, slightly licorice-flavored tea. Next spring, I'm particularly looking forward to trying roasted cattail rhizomes and making my own gluten-free flour from cattail pollen.

The back matter of the book includes a glossary, a quick-reference seasonality chart for optimum harvesting times, and a detailed index.

If you're interested in identifying and foraging wild foods, I highly recommend *Foraging: Explore Nature's Bounty and Turn your Foraged Finds into Flavorful Feasts*. The next time you're out in the wilderness, it may help you discover a welcomed snack to enjoy!

(For more information about Dr. Mark “Merriwether” Vorderbruggen, please visit his website [foragingtexas.com](http://foragingtexas.com) for a list of over 200 wild edibles that thrive in Texas as well as many other parts of North America. His website [medicinemanplantco.com](http://medicinemanplantco.com) offers ancestral health tips on the *Learn and Live* page. On his YouTube channel, Dr. Vorderbruggen hosts 25 informational episodes of *Merriwether's World* at <https://www.youtube.com/user/drmerriwether>.)



*"Christmas Caroling" © Jack Olson  
2nd Place Cultural Category, 2005 Contest*

*Hope everyone had a wonderful holiday!*



*"Ice Art" © Sherry Zurey  
2nd Place Color Prints Category,  
2005 Contest*

Larry Lizard plans to renew his membership, count the birds, and take part in the Zoom meeting. He hopes you do, too.

*Lizard © Richard Youngblood  
Honorable Mention, Fauna Category, 2006 contest*



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