

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

## Upcoming Events

### Election Time!

It's time to elect new officers (secretary and treasurer). Ballots will be emailed the first week of May and must be returned by May 31. The newly elected will take office on June 1. Please vote! For more info, see Page 5.

### Contest Deadline Announced!

Mark your calendars for the RMOWP Photo and Writing Contest entry due date! This year's deadline is **June 29, 2026**. For more information, please see Page 5 of this newsletter or visit [rmowp.org](http://rmowp.org).

### RMOWP Showcase

During our Annual Conference (September 29 - October 2, 2026), RMOWP will partner with the Grand Junction Library for a public showcase event on Friday, October 2, 2026 from 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm. Entry deadline is **May 17**. For more information, see Page 3.

## Grand Junction, Here We Come!

*by Steve Cochrane*

The Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers (RMOWP) will host its 2026 Annual Conference in Grand Junction, Colorado, bringing members together for four days of education, collaboration, and outdoor exploration.

The conference schedule is nearly complete, with just a few final confirmations remaining. Full details will be available soon on the RMOWP website ([rmowp.org](http://rmowp.org)).

The conference will be held Tuesday, September 29, through Friday, October 2, 2026, and will be based at the Clarion Inn (755 Horizon Drive, Grand Junction, Colorado 81506). A 10% room discount is available for attending members while rooms last.

Attendees can look forward to a dynamic lineup of workshops, presentations, and field experiences designed specifically for outdoor writers, photographers, and communicators. Highlights include:

- Bird banding demonstrations and guided bird walks with local experts
- Writing and publishing workshops
- Photography critiques and editing sessions
- Travel and outdoor photography presentations
- A sunset and moonrise outing at Colorado National Monument
- Networking opportunities, member auction, and annual awards banquet

This conference is shaping up to be an incredible week of learning, creativity, and connection. And don't forget — the **Blue Angels Air Show** will take place that weekend, adding even more excitement to the experience.

## President's Column



*RMOWP President, Linda Haehnle*

Ahhhhhhh yes  
..... Springtime!  
A time for  
flowers to bloom,  
birds to sing, and  
trees to leaf out.  
It's good to see  
green again... (we  
hope)... as nature  
around us comes  
alive. While  
winter was

'unusual' this year, spring is continuing to be just as crazy..... so we'll see what is in store for us.

I'm including a little bit of history on our upcoming holidays .. Hope you enjoy!

"...Mother's Day was officially established in the US by Anna Jarvis in 1908 to honor her mother, who was a community activist. It became a national holiday in 1914 via President Woodrow Wilson, aimed at celebrating maternal love....."

"...Father's Day was first proposed in 1909 by Sonora Smart Dodd who wanted to honor her father, a Civil War veteran who raised six children alone. It was first celebrated on June 19, 1910, which was the birthday month of her father. However it was not until 1972 —58 years after President Wilson made Mother's Day official — that it became a nationwide holiday in the US..."

On Memorial Day, Americans honor the brave men and women in the armed forces who lost their lives protecting our country. Previously known as Decoration Day, the origin may be traced back to the years following the American Civil War. Memorial Day officially became a federal holiday in 1971..... and is a day of solemn contemplation to reflect on the cost of freedom.

On another note, we are all getting excited about the upcoming annual conference — which will be here before you know it. Vice President Steve Cochrane and his team have put together a great itinerary and lots of fun activities!!

Looking forward to seeing you all in Grand Junction! ~Linda

**R** **MOWP Survey Reminder!** As you'll remember, we sent you a survey March 18, specifically asking about your conference preferences. Thanks to all that responded, but if you didn't, there's still time! If you can't find the survey, email Don Laine at [laine@newmex.com](mailto:laine@newmex.com). Thanks!

---

**Rocky Mountain Outdoors**  
**Published bi-monthly by**  
**Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers, Inc.**  
**Editor: Don Laine**

Send editorial materials to Don Laine, [info@rmowp.org](mailto:info@rmowp.org), or snail mail to 76 Eototo Road, El Prado, NM 87529.

Opinions expressed in articles in Rocky Mountain Outdoors are those of the articles' authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers, its officers, board of directors, and staff.

©2026 by Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers, Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission from author and editor.

**RMOWP Officers:**

- President: Linda Haehnle, Aurora, CO (2027)
- Vice President: Steve Cochrane, Rangely, CO (2027)
- Secretary: Kent Taylor, Richardson, TX (2026)
- Treasurer: Maryann Gaug, Silverthorne, CO (2026)
- Past President: Virginia Staat, The Woodlands, TX (2027)

**Board of Directors:**

- Dan Bernskoetter, Lohman, MO (2026)
- Al Perry, Herriman, UT (2026)
- June Wolfe, Mesa, AZ (2027)
- David Staat, The Woodlands, TX (2027)
- Ron Belak, Kittridge, CO (2028)
- Jimmy Smith, Richmond, TX (2028)

---

## Conference Update

---

### Capturing The Outdoors — RMOWP Photography & Writing Showcase

---

by Steve Cochrane

A major highlight of this year's conference is the public showcase, "Capturing the Outdoors," taking place: **Friday, October 2 from 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM at the Grand Junction Library.**

This special event invites the local community to experience the work of RMOWP members through photography displays, writing exhibits, and live readings.

Members may participate by:

- Displaying up to **five photography prints** (any format: canvas, metal, framed, or unframed)
- Showcasing **published or unpublished writing**
- Reading selections aloud during scheduled times
- Sharing the story behind a featured photograph

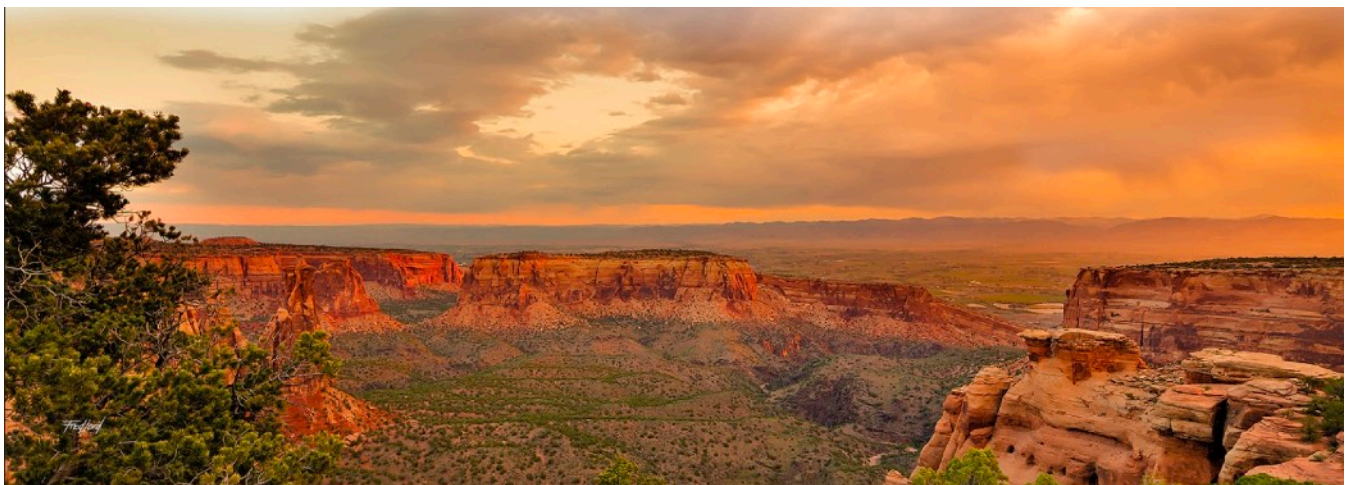
Each participating photographer will be provided a table space (please bring your own display easels as needed).

This showcase is a collaborative effort with the Western Colorado Writers' Forum, creating a unique opportunity to connect visual storytelling with the written word while engaging the Grand Junction community.

Please note: This is a **non-commercial event**. No sales will be permitted. However, members are encouraged to bring business cards or contact information for those interested in their work.

A small **\$10 participation donation** will help support event promotion and refreshments for attendees.

👉 Members interested in participating can sign up here: <https://rmowp.org/sign-up-showcase>



*Colorado National Monument, Fred Lord*

## 2026 Conference Highlight: Water into Wine



*photos and text by  
Ron Belak*

Turning water into wine is not a new concept. All Christians are familiar with the 2,000-year-old biblical reference to Jesus turning water into wine for wedding attendees. Those attending this fall's RMOWP conference in Grand Junction may also see water turned into wine. RMOWP conference planners are furiously trying to make this happen. However, it will not be with divine intervention, and it will not happen with the snap of their fingers or a wave of their hands. Our planners are good, but not that good. Instead, it will involve moving irrigation water from the Grand Mesa and the Colorado River to the vines; months of growing the grapes; weeks of harvesting, processing and bottling; and ultimately a trip to the tasting rooms. Planners only have to worry about arranging this last step.

The Grand Mesa is a large volcanic prominence located about 25 miles east of Grand Junction. It rises 6,000 feet from the Grand Valley, and its top, which averages 10,000 feet in elevation, is covered with 800 square miles of lush meadows and forests of aspen, spruce and fir. About 300 water bodies dot the top of the Mesa. They are mostly reservoirs, which supply municipal water to Grand Junction and irrigation water to the surrounding lowlands. Crops include the famous Palisade peaches, apples, cherries, pears, plums and, of course, grapes. The Grand Valley, stretching from Grand Junction to Palisade, has the best climate in Colorado for growing grapes—hot and dry summer days, cool evenings and frost-decreasing winds. Fertile soil also contributes to abundant harvests. I tasted my first Colorado wine in the mid-1980s, and it was absolutely awful. But things have changed markedly since then, and Colorado wines have earned national and international awards. *Wine Enthusiast* magazine even named the Grand Valley of Colorado as one of the top ten wine-travel destinations in the world.

People first planted Old World grape vines (*Vitis vinifera*) in Colorado in the 1860s, and Governor George Crawford planted the first vineyard (60 acres) in 1890. However, Prohibition squashed the nascent wine industry in 1916. Most of the vines were torn up, and people planted fruit trees in their place. No one paid serious attention again to wine in Colorado until 1968 when Gerald Ivancie opened a winery in Denver and championed the planting of grapes in the Grand Valley. An influx of prominent California vintners helped the industry grow from 5 wineries in 1990 to about 150 wineries today. High elevations of 4,000 feet in the Grand Valley make for a short growing season and favor the planting of quicker-ripening grapes, like Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Viognier. However, vintners grow many other varieties, and wineries occur throughout Colorado. The West Elk Viticultural Area, south of the Grand Mesa, boasts some of the highest elevation vineyards in the Northern Hemisphere.

In addition to furnishing water to irrigate crops, the Grand Mesa offers other opportunities for visitors. A scenic drive there is always rewarding, with the possibility of spotting moose, deer and elk, and there are several campgrounds available for tent as well as RV camping. However, early October is cold on the Mesa, with nights plunging below freezing, and snow is possible. Some of the many water bodies offer excellent fishing opportunities. However, Colorado Parks and Wildlife only stocks about 100 of the 300 waters with trout, and many others are drawn dry by the end of the irrigating season. Conference attendees can bribe RMOWP member Ron Belak into revealing which of these waters have the best fishing. It will only take a glass or two of wine, and the secrets are sure to flow.



## 2026 Photo & Writing Contest

**R**MOWP's 2026 Photo and Writing Contest deadline has been set for Monday, June 29, 2026. We look forward to members sharing their writing and photography work through the competition.

You must be a member of RMOWP to submit work to the contest. However, you are welcome to join RMOWP with your contest entry. Entries must be either postmarked or you can Dropbox them to [frank@zureyphoto.com](mailto:frank@zureyphoto.com) no later than Monday, June 29, 2026. Entry fee is \$20 for all of your combined entries. For rules and entry forms, please see [rmowp.org](http://rmowp.org).

## Member News

**R**MOWP is pleased to welcome one new member and one returning member.

**Paul Cañada** from Golden, Colorado, joined recently after learning about RMOWP from a member. Paul tells us that he is a photographer, writer, lecturer, artist, and editor, specializing in media relations and video. His interests include fly fishing, hiking, camping, ranching, horses, and environmental politics; and his professional credits include numerous fishing and horse-related magazines, plus the Dallas Morning News, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Fish & Game, Western Outdoors, and Southern Outdoors.

RMOWP welcomes back **Emily Harrington** of Golden, Colorado, granddaughter of longtime RMOWP member Frank Zurey and daughter of member Deanna Zurey. Emily is a photographer who tells us that her interests include "most nature photography, but animals and mountain landscapes are my favorite." She likes to photograph Alaska bears and whales, Alaska and Colorado scenery, and using AI for image editing, "especially blurry edges."

## Election Time

It's time to elect a new treasurer and possibly a secretary. Candidate for treasurer is Eric Glassco, a relatively new RMOWP member. See the newsletters of September-October 2025 and May-June 2025 for information about Eric. The position of secretary is currently open, and we're looking for volunteers. The main job of the secretary is to take minutes at the board and general membership meetings held during the annual conference, so we're looking for someone who plans to attend most or all conferences and get there early for the board meeting.

Interested? Contact Don Laine: [laine@newmex.com](mailto:laine@newmex.com).



*Colorado National Monument, William Horton*



*Colorado National Monument, Beto Gutierrez*

## Writer's Corner

### Painting with Words

*text and photo by Virginia Parker Staat*

*“The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor; it is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in the dissimilar.” ~Aristotle*

My older sister hates to travel, so I often call her during David’s and my adventures to tell her about the places we visit and sights we see. I find that these conversations often become painting with words. I might describe how the red eyeshine of a certain grizzly bear made him look like some mythical beast. Or try to explain an ocean’s angry roar. Describing these scenes to my sister usually involves metaphors and similes that allow her to share my experiences.



*Grizzly bear with red eyeshine, Yukon Territory*

As nature writers, our goal is to bring our words to life, connecting the natural world with the human experience, no matter how limited our reader’s experience might be. We often use metaphors and similes to convey emotions and imagery. Choreographer Twyla Tharp said, “Creativity is more about taking the facts, fictions, and feelings we store away and finding new ways to connect them. What we’re talking about here is metaphor. Metaphor is the lifeblood of all art, if it is not art itself. Metaphor is our vocabulary for connecting what we are experiencing now with what we have experienced before. It’s not only how we express what we remember, it’s how we interpret it — for ourselves and others.”

Metaphors are figures of speech that directly compare two unrelated things: “He’s a rising star.” Similes are similar, but use “like” or “as” in the comparison: “He is busy as a bee.”

Using metaphors and similes is one of a writer’s most powerful tools. In his article, *Nature as Language: Mastering Metaphors in English Grammar*, Mahmud writes, “When applied to nature, a metaphor describes elements of the natural world by associating them with something else, often human traits, emotions, or objects. This creates a vivid and relatable image, enhancing our understanding and appreciation of nature. The function of nature metaphors is to evoke emotion, create imagery, and provide new perspectives on the natural world.”

In the past, nature writers would take several pages of elaborate description of a specific scene. Modern readers, however, are less tolerant of lengthy descriptions, a reflection of our fast-paced world. In *Writing About Nature*, John Murray states, “Your aim is to paint word pictures that cause your readers to “feel” a scene that cannot, in its strictest sense, ever be viewed. To do this properly, you cannot paint every detail, rather you must find what is essential.”

Murray continues with ways to get started building word pictures. He writes, “look for texture, color, lines, shadowing, and movement the same discerning way an artist does. Search for those important details that make the scene singular. At the same time, look for images that will make the scene familiar to your readers.”

Painting with words in your nature writing brings emotion to your readers, connecting them through imagery, comparisons, and shared experiences. Painting with words takes something abstract and turns it into something relatable for your reader. It adds flavor, depth, and expressiveness to your writing, making it more memorable. Use your pallet of words and raise your nature writing to the next level.

### Table of Contents

Contest Deadline .....	5
Election Time .....	5
Member News .....	5
President’s Column .....	2
RMOWP Showcase .....	3
Water into Wine .....	4
Writer’s Corner .....	6