ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

Upcoming Event

RMOWP's monthly photo share will be a Zoom event on November 8, 2026, at 6:00 PM Mountain Time. This is a great opportunity to share your photography, see what other members have been capturing, exchange ideas, and enjoy an evening of photography together.

For our November monthly challenge, we're going with Black & White Photography. Whether it's a dramatic landscape, wildlife portrait, or an interesting subject, show us how you see the world without color.

For more information on how to submit your photos and connect to the Zoom meeting, check out our rmowp.org website.

We hope you'll join us!

Best of Show 2025

Best of Show Photography: John Hanou, *"Red Sails, Ilulissat Greenland 2"*



Best of Show Writing: Steve Cochrane, *Summit Night — Kilimanjaro*

(To read Steve's award-winning piece, see RMOWP's March/April 2026 newsletter.)

President's Column



RMOWP President, Linda Haehnle

Greetings to all!
As we say 'so long' to Grand Junction, Colorado, all reports and commentary to me indicate it was another successful conference!
Thanks to VP Steve Cochrane for the engaging itinerary, new activities promoting our bird friends, and the joint venture Library Day with the Grand Junction Writers Forum. And certainly thanks to everyone for their participation.

Reviewing the minutes from the Board meeting and General Membership meeting, there were many good suggestions — and feedback— for change that Leadership will discuss and follow up on. Please stay tuned for updates and progress…

As fall colors start to wane, and a chill in the air signals the coming of winter (hopefully with snow in Colorado this year), I wish you all a holiday season of good cheer, good health, and many moments to celebrate with loved ones.
Many Blessings, Linda



1st Flora, Kent Taylor, Lavender Lady

Grand Junction Conference Has Come and Gone

by Don Laine

RMOWP's annual conference took place September 29 to October 2 in Grand Junction, Colorado, with several dozen members and guests participating.

Highlights included a bird banding program and a guided bird walk, both with guides from the Grand Valley Audubon Society. There was also a sunset and moonrise photo opportunity at Colorado National Monument and a tribute to member Jack Olson, who died in August.

As usual we had excellent writing and photography workshops, including one from several RMOWP members on photographing wildlife at Santa Clara Ranch in south Texas, owned and operated by members Beto and Clare Gutierrez.

There were also programs on publishing, journaling in the backcountry, writing clever and catchy photo titles, and editing wildlife photos; plus the writers' forum, photo critique, auction, a members' photography and writing showcase, and a workshop titled "Lines, Layers, Levels, and Light" by new member and current treasurer Eric Glassco.

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1st Historical, Steve Cochrane, Pueblo Door

Photography Judge - Fred Lord
Fred Lord is a long-time resident of Colorado. From the age of twelve he developed an early love of photography, mostly of landscapes and nature, packing along a 35mm rangefinder camera during parts of his youth. Now retired, Fred is still looking for that perfect scenic, wildlife, and/or nature photograph.

Writing Judge - Mary Taylor Young
Author and naturalist Mary Taylor Young has been writing about the landscape and heritage of Colorado and the American West for 35 years. Her 22nd book—Bluebird Seasons: Witnessing Climate Change In My Piece of the Wild—was published in May 2023 by Chicago Review Press. Mary's honors include the 2018 Frank Waters Award for exemplary literary achievement and a canon of writing that communicates a deep understanding, celebration and love of the West; 2019 induction into the Colorado Authors Hall of Fame; and the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Colorado Authors' League. She has been a RMOWP contest judge and convention presenter for many years. Mary contributed to and was managing editor of her latest project, At Home In Nature: The History of Colorado's State Parks.

Video Judge - Ann Lukacs
Ann fell in love with photography at an early age. She has been working in the camera department in the motion picture industry for over 40 years. Her industry experience coupled with her knowledge of living in the mountains has unwittingly realigned some of her work to location scouting. In addition to working on major studio feature films and national commercials, she works as an independent filmmaker. Working as a filmmaker has given her the experience of storytelling and how to combine all the various elements of production to create the final film. Ann is the President/CEO of the "Park County Creative Alliance", a newly formed nonprofit with the vision to "Unite Park County Through the Arts." In addition, Ann has been involved with promoting film production in Colorado.

"If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere." Vincent van Gogh

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RMOWP Officers:
President: Linda Haehnle, Aurora, CO (2027)
Vice President: Steve Cochrane, Rangely, CO (2027)
Treasurer: Eric Glassco, Las Cruces, NM (2028)
Past President, Virginia Staat, The Woodlands, TX

Board of Directors:
June Wolfe, Mesa, AZ (2027)
David Staat, The Woodlands, TX (2027)
Ron Belak, Kittridge, CO (2028)
Jimmy Smith, Richmond, TX (2028)

Contest Winners 2025

See www.rmowp.org for judges' comments, images, and other details.

Photography Winners:

01 Images from Last Conference
- 1st Frank Zurey, IV - Rio Grande Bridge at Night
- 2nd Dan Bernskoetter - Pueblo Buildings
- 3rd Kent Taylor - Irresistible Ristras
- HM Buddy Green - Bighorn Ewe, Rio Grande River Gorge
- HM Steve Cochrane - Hanging Fire
- HM Judy Lehmkuhl - Mission Bell

02 Scenics
- 1st John Hanou - Red Sails, Ilulissat Greenland 2
- 2nd John Hanou - Red Sails, Ilulissat Greenland 1
- 3rd Ron Belak - Nuages au-dessu Aiguille du Midi
- HM John Hanou - Vestrahorn Mountain, Iceland
- HM Kent Taylor - Sunrise at Smith Rock
- HM Ron Belak - Lazy Lavaux Landscape
- HM Judy Lemkuhl - Sand Dunes

03 Flora
- 1st Kent Taylor - Lavender Lady
- 2nd Randy Watkins - All Alone
- 3rd Kent Taylor - Autumn's Portal
- HM Judy Lehmkuhl - Leaves and Lichen
- HM Kent Taylor - Subtle Surprise
- HM June Wolfe - Pink Hollyhock

04 Fauna
- 1st Dan Bernskoetter - Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
- 2nd Frank Zurey - Bobcat Visitor
- 3rd Dan Bernskoetter - Northern Mockingbird on the Run
- HM David Zurey - Mid-Air Flight
- HM Kent Taylor - A Moment's Connection
- HM Randy Watkins - Dinner Time

05 People in Nature
- 1st Frank Zurey - Close Encounters
- 2nd Steve Cochrane - Top of Africa
- 3rd Ron Belak - Up, Up and Away
- HM Ron Belak - Marching to the Matterhorn

06 Historical
•1st Steve Cochrane - Pueblo Door
•2nd John Hanou - 1884 Noah Armstrong Round Barn, MT
•3rd Frank Zurey - Ranchos des Taos, circa 1772
•HM Frank Zurey - San Jose de Gracias Church, circa 1760
•HM John Hanou - 1782 Zion's Lutheran Church, Ilulissat, Greenland

07 Cultural
•1st Judy Lehmkuhl - Iditarod Dogs Who Loved Me
•2nd Ron Belak - Gondola Adventure
•3rd - Frank Zurey, IV - Applying New Adobe, San Francisco de Asis

08 Natural Phenomena
•1st Kent Taylor - Cinema in the Sky
•2nd John Hanou - Northern Lights over Berufjorour, Iceland
•3rd David Zurey - Milky Way
•HM Judy Lehmkuhl - Alaskan Lights
•HM Judy Lehmkuhl - Pilot Mountain
•HM Frank Zurey - Milky Way

09 Altered Composite
•1st Dan Berkskoetter - Fungi in Color
•2nd Randy Watkins - Up, Up and Away!
•3rd Ron Belak - Hungry for Hoppers

10 Black & White
•1st Frank Zurey - Breaching Humpback Whale
•2nd Ron Belak - Aiguille du Midi
•3rd Randy Watkins - The Stare
•HM Frank Zurey - The Little Bear Got a Salmon
•HM John Hanou - Red Sails, Ililussat, Greenland 4
•HM Ron Belak - Angry Matterhorn

11 Novice
•1st June Wolfe - Spout and Fluke, Humpback Whales
•2nd Buddy Green - Slingshot, Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR

Contest Winners 2025 (continued)

11 Novice (*continued from Page 4*)
- 3rd Buddy Green - Gathering the Harem, Curt Gowdy State Park, WY
- HM Frank Zurey, IV - Sparrows Kiss
- HM Buddy Green - Bighorn Ram, Big Thompson Canyon, CO

12 Published Images
- 1st Buddy Green - Spotted Towhee
- 2nd Ron Belak - Milking the Tiger
- 3rd Dan Bernskoetter - Painted Turtle
- HM Ron Belak - Campsite Guests
- HM Frank Zurey - Screech Owl
- HM John Hanou - 1911 E.T. Fitzgerald Round Barn, MT

Humorous Photographs
- Deanna Zurey - Splash Landing
- Buddy Greene - Wet Paint
- Frank Zurey - Praying for Salmon

Writing, Video, Art, Member's Choice and Humorous Photo Winners

24 Newspaper, Magazine or other publications - articles/columns/editorials
- 1st Ron Belak - Fall Fishing in the Backcountry
- 2nd Michael Salomone - Night Visions
- 3rd Dan Bernskoetter - Plant It and They Will Come

26 Newsletter and Web Writing - Articles/ Columns/Editorials/Short Stories
- 1st Summit Night - Kilimanjaro
- 2nd Ron Belak - Water into Wine

28 Unpublished Written Works
- 1st Judy Lehmkuhl - The Old Grey Farmhouse
- 2nd Judy Lehmkuhl - Jessica and the Brainard Lake-Isabelle Trail
- 3rd Judy Lehmkuhl - Uji's Saga

29 Books
1st - Paul Cañada - The Promise — A Fly Angler's Long Journey Home

30 Full-length Video
- 1st Ron Belak - Paragliding in Chamonix, France
- 2nd Dan Bernskoetter - Santa Clara Ranch, 2026

31 Video Clips
- 1st Ron Belak - Playful Pups
- 2nd Frank Zurey - Strutting His Stuff
- 3rd Frank Zurey - Bobbing for Salmon
- HM Dan Bernskoetter - Calming Swimming Ducks

Member's Choice
- 1st tie Frank Zurey - Pika Gathering
- 1st tie Fred Lord - Hummingbird
- 2nd Ron Belak - Lapping It Up

Spark Plug Award Announced



It was announced at the conference that RMOWP's Past Presidents' Council presented the Spark Plug Award — a wood and metal plaque sporting a prominent automotive spark plug — to longtime member Virginia Parker Staat for her "outstanding efforts in furthering RMOWP's goals."

Membership Renewal Due Soon

Membership renewals are due in January. About mid-January, membership chair Maryann Gaug will email membership renewals to everyone whose membership expired at the end of 2025.

Please remember to pay your dues promptly. If you have decided not to renew your membership, please let Maryann know so that she won't bug you in February and March. If you have a financial issue with dues, please contact Maryann. We have ways to help.

Emails will also be sent to members who paid for multiple years and to life members stating their membership is in good standing.

If you need more information, please email Maryann at megaug@earthlink.net

Conference Photos

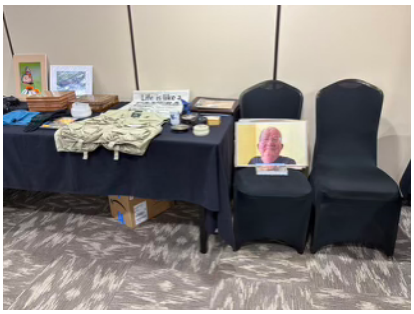








Conference photographers include Ron Belak, Maryann Gaug, Don Laine, and Kent Taylor.



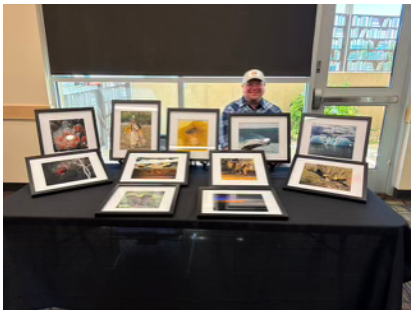














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Capulin Volcano National Monument

by Don Laine, photos courtesy NPS



Robinson Peak

Ever had the urge to walk into a volcano? Here's your chance.

Capulin Volcano National Monument, off I-25 near the New Mexico-Colorado line, offers a close-up view of a volcanic crater plus an opportunity to walk around the rim as well as down into its depths. It also provides opportunities to see an abundance of birds and animals and a variety of colorful wildflowers in June and July.

An almost perfectly-shaped cinder cone, Capulin Volcano has been a landmark for centuries - first for Native Americans; then for Spanish explorers, who named it *capulin* for the wild chokecherries that grow on its slopes; and then for Americans traveling the Cimarron Cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail.

The volcano was born some 60,000 years ago, near the end of a long period of volcanic activity in the area. Had we been there we would have felt the grassy plain start to shake, then, assuming we were brave enough to stay, we could have watched as the earth split open, emitting black smoke.

Glowing cinders and ash shot high into the sky, and the volcano released its river of lava, covering almost 16 square miles. By the time the earthquakes and eruptions ended, a new mountain had been created - a cinder cone rising more than 1,200 feet above the surrounding plains.

The first thing we notice is the volcano's shape - almost perfectly symmetrical - because most of the lava did not flow out the main crater, but escaped through an opening along the cone's western flank.

After the ground had stopped shaking and the volcanic rocks had cooled, the forces of nature went to work. Wind and water eroded the volcanic rock, creating soil which gave lichen and small plants a chance to grow. Gradually, grasses, bushes, and finally trees moved in, creating the velvety appearance we see today.

The monument, operated by the National Park Service, is easy to explore. The two-mile Volcano Highway leads to a parking lot at the Volcano's rim, where an overlook with interpretive signs offers good views into the crater.

From the rim parking area the one-mile self-guiding Crater Rim Trail loops around the rim of the crater, passing volcanic boulders spotted with lichen, as well as Gambel oak. In a few areas you'll also see ponderosa pines, the monument's tallest living thing. Although paved and mostly easy, the trail has a few steep grades near the beginning as it climbs about 300 feet to the monument's highest point of 8,182 feet.



Little Grande

There are splendid views both into the crater and out across the plains, where dozens of other extinct volcanos are visible. On a clear day, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains can be seen. The trail has benches and overlooks with signs that help hikers identify distant landmarks.

Also from the rim parking area, the 0.2-mile (one-way) Crater Vent Trail drops into the crater. It leads to the vent - the spot on the earth's surface from which the cinders, ash, and lava erupted. The paved trail drops a bit over 100 feet. Near a picnic area off Volcano Highway, the one-mile Lava Flow Trail loops through a piñon-juniper forest at the base of the volcano.

(Continued on Page 8)

Capulin Volcano (*continued*) and Winning Photos

(Capulin Volcano continued from Page 7)



Rabbit Ears Mountain

Along all three trails, as well as at the visitor center, watch for a variety of birds, many attracted by the numerous chokecherry bushes. Among species seen year-round are rufous-sided towhees, scrub jays, mountain chickadees, American robins, and red-tailed hawks. Mountain bluebirds are also year-round residents, but are especially prevalent in early fall. Common in summer are wild turkeys, turkey vultures, blue-gray gnatcatchers, mourning doves, both black-chinned and broad-tailed hummingbirds, western meadowlarks, and black-headed grosbeaks.

Year-round there's a good chance of seeing mule deer, especially early and late in the day along the wooded edges of meadows. Also watch for porcupines, chipmunks, rock squirrels, bobcats, and coyotes. Occasionally black bears are seen.

The visitor center has exhibits on the creation of the volcano and other aspects of the area's geology, as well as the human history and plants and animals of the area. A short video on the volcano's creation is shown, with film from a volcanic eruption in Mexico in 1943 that is believed to be similar to the creation of Capulin. During summer months short ranger talks on volcanos are offered. Outside the visitor center is a short, easy nature trail.

There is no camping at the monument, but nearby Sugarite Canyon State Park has two attractive campgrounds, plus hiking trails, lakes, wildlife, and the ruins of an early twentieth-century coal camp.

Capulin Volcano is located 33 miles east of Raton, NM, via US 64/87 and NM 325. See www.nps.gov/cavo.



1st Fauna, Dan Bernskoetter, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher



1st Black & White, Frank Zurey, Breaching Humpback Whale



1st Published, Buddy Greene, Spotted Towhee in Wild Birds Unlimited 2026 Calendar