

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

Conference Coming Soon!

RMOWP's 2026 conference is right around the corner, and the conference registration form is ready and waiting for you, available at rmowp.org, where you can fill it out and register online. The conference is in Grand Junction, Colorado, September 29 through October 2, with headquarters at the Grand Junction Clarion Inn. Details are on the RMOWP website.

See you there!



Jack Olson, by Virginia Staat

by Don Laine

RMOWP has lost a shining star.

Jack Olson, RMOWP member since 1977, passed away August 18 at the age of 88. A longtime Denver resident and an expert on traveling in Colorado, Jack moved to Destin, Florida in 2021 to be closer to his sister.

As a youth Jack acted in school plays, which continued in college and in community theater in Denver. He spent his junior

year of college in the Netherlands and received an MA in economics from the University of Illinois. He worked for the state of Colorado's Department of Urban Development for 20 years, but the Colorado mountains led him to become a freelance photographer, and he later began travel writing to accompany his photos.

As a freelance photographer and writer, Jack's work appeared in numerous publications including Backpacker, Audubon, Midwest Traveler, Colorado Outdoors, and National Parks Conservation Association magazines; plus books from National Geographic and Reader's Digest. He also had a longtime column — Jack's Jaunts — in RMOWP's newsletter.

Jack served as RMOWP president, board member, photo workshop instructor, and member of the conference committee, and he won the Selected Works in Photography Award twice and the Spark Plug Award.

On hearing of Jack's passing, RMOWP members praised him as a "delightful person" and "a generous and kind soul." As RMOWP member Maryann Gaug said, "I know he's already hiking as many trails and mountains as he can find in the spirit world. Happy hiking, Jack, and thanks for being a wonderful friend!"

(Continued on Page Two.)

President's Column



RMOWP President, Linda Haehnle

Greetings!

According to the calendar, September is just around the corner! As summer begins to wind down - (whew!) — and we all look

forward to fall with cooler temps and beautiful colors, it can only mean one more thing GRAND JUNCTION HERE WE COME !!!! The Annual Conference promises to be fun, enlightening, and a good setting to explore the many facets of the Western Slope.

Conference organizer Steve Cochrane has worked hard to bring new experiences to our gathering, along with the usual aspects we have all come to enjoy. So grab your cameras, additional photo/writing submissions, and plan to meet up at the Clarion in Grand Junction. Looking forward to seeing you! Safe travels! ~Linda

Another RMOWP member, Russ Bromby, had this to say about Jack:

"I considered him to be the heart and soul of RMOWP... The story about him quitting a perfectly good job with the state of Colorado to become a full-time freelance photographer came from a conversation with member Mel Davis (now deceased) of Utah's Wasatch Publishing encouraging Jack to pursue his talents in photography. As Jack told it, he quit his job to embark on this new adventure (not solely at Mel's suggestion) and when he informed Mel of his decision, Mel responded with an incredulous "You did WHAT?"

Survivors include Jack's sister Ann Bogardus (106 Roundwood Dr., Inlet Beach, FL 32461), brother-in-law Ralph Bogardus, two nieces and a nephew. The family has requested that memorial donations be made to the National Park Service or a charity of your choice.



Jack Olson, by Russ Bromby

RMOWP will have a short tribute to Jack during the upcoming conference in Grand Junction, Colorado.

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What to Bring to the Conference

Where does the time go? In less than a month we'll be gathering at RMOWP's annual conference in Grand Junction, Colorado, and it's time to start organizing the stuff you'll want to bring. So here's a checklist:

- **WRITING FOR THE ANNE SULLIVAN WRITERS FORUM** — Your written work will be gently and positively examined with the purpose of finding ways to improve it. Works can include stories, poems, photo essays, or other formats with an outdoor theme. Participants should bring at least eight copies of the work, and although the length of the works can vary, about 1,200 words or less would be best. It should not be your best work, but something you would like help with. Spectators — and commentators — are welcome.
- **PHOTOS FOR THE PHOTO CRITIQUE** — Entertaining and informative for all, this program looks at photographs with an eye to how they could be improved. Those who want their photos critiqued should bring three to five digital images on CDs or flash drives.
- **PHOTOS FOR THE MEMBERS' CHOICE CONTEST** — Conference participants are the judges for this contest. Members may submit one or two matted prints, either color or black and white, and the photos may have been taken at any time. Altered/manipulated images are eligible. Each entry is to be designated as Scenic, Flora, or Fauna. Print size is a maximum of 8 x 12 inches that is matted to a final size not to exceed 12 x 16 inches, and entries should not be framed. On the back of each submission write "Members Choice" but not your name — we'll keep track of which belongs to whom.
- **DONATIONS FOR THE AUCTION** — The RMOWP Auction is not only a lot of fun but also raises some necessary funds to help pay for the conference. Bring your own matted photos (maybe your Members' Choice Contest entries?) or note cards, published books, craft and gift items, photo equipment, or whatever you find lying around the house — NO spouses allowed!!

THANKS!

Conference Highlights

by Steve Cochrane

Conference attendees will have two special opportunities to experience and photograph the Grand Valley's birdlife during this year's RMOWP Conference.

On Wednesday, September 30, from 7:30–9:00 AM, our group will visit Connected Lakes for a bird-banding demonstration with Grand Valley Audubon. Participants will get an up-close look at how birds are safely captured, identified, measured and banded before being released. It should also provide some unique photography opportunities and a fascinating look at bird research and migration.

Then, on Thursday, October 1, from 8:00–10:00 AM, we'll head out for a guided bird walk with Logan Wagner of Grand Valley Audubon. Early October falls during fall migration, so we could encounter everything from Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks and raptors to sparrows, kinglets, towhees and migrating warblers.

These two mornings should be a great addition to the conference for photographers, writers and anyone who enjoys wildlife and the outdoors.

RMOWP Vice President Steve Cochrane Releases New Bailey Bearson Book

RMOWP Vice President and wildlife photographer Steve Cochrane has released the newest book in his Bailey Bearson Adventures children's series, *Bailey Bearson and the Fluffiest Tail*.

Inspired by one of Steve's real wildlife photography experiences, the story follows Bailey as he meets Lucy the Fox and learns about her fluffy tail, sharp hearing and other adaptations that help foxes survive in the wild.

The Bailey Bearson series combines outdoor adventure, wildlife education and photography to encourage young readers to explore and learn more about the natural world.

Bailey Bearson and the Fluffiest Tail is available along with Steve's photography and other Bailey Bearson products at stevecochraneshop.com.

Jack Olson Photos Through the Years

photos by Russ Bromby and Maryann Gaug



Jack Olson wrote this profile about himself for the newsletter in 1988.

PROFILES



THE JACK OLSON STORY, BY JACK

I grew up in Hoopeston, Illinois-- "Sweetcorn Capital of the World". My schooling was at DePauw University and the University of Illinois, with a year spent studying in the Netherlands. That year abroad, plus a trip west to work in a pea factory in Washington State, began my love of travel. It also convinced me that I would eventually become a Westerner.

First, though, I put in time working for Mobil Oil in New York City. I worked in a tall office building, putting numbers in boxes, and quickly determined that was not the life for me. So I packed everything I owned into my old Chevy and moved to Colorado in 1965. I have lived in Denver ever since.

For twenty years I worked for the State of Colorado's economic development agency. The last three of those years, I was the director of the Colorado International Trade Office. This was good work with great people, but the time comes when it's time to do something else. For me, that was outdoor photography.

From the time I arrived in Colorado, I was a very active hiker, mountain climber, backpacker, and amateur photographer. The outdoors became a passion and a love.

Photographing the outdoors was a natural adjunct to my enjoyment, and helped me to better observe and appreciate nature. Occasionally, I would sell photographs to publications, and I did some photography for the Colorado Office of Tourism.

In 1978, Gregg Chancellor, a Charter RMOWP member, convinced me that RMOWP would be a good way for me to grow in my craft, and that maybe I had something to offer the group. I'm not sure what I had to offer, but did put on a program that year on the Himalayas, where I touched, but did not climb, Mt. Everest. Since then I've been a Board member on two separate occasions, ran the photo competition once, put on photo workshops in the outdoors, and have become the unofficial Keeper of the By-Laws (due to my computer).

I quit my job with the State of Colorado and began my own business, Jack Olson Photography, on July 1, 1986. I have spent much of the next 18 months travelling throughout the West to fill in gaps in my stock of photos. That stock now includes some 30,000 transparencies, primarily of the Western outdoors. In the last year I've been to 27 national parks, and about an equal number of monuments, to photograph new subjects and improve on those I already had.

This first year, I have been mainly selling slides to publications for one-time use. Slides have been going back and forth at an increasing rate. Sometimes their return is accompanied by a little money. We'll try to get that going at an increasing rate, too. Photos have been published or sold to such projects as Falcon Press' series of Colorado books, Saintry Publishing's educational book, Colorado Tourism Board, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado lottery tickets, Skies America inflight magazine, and Bison Books.

If I hadn't become a member of RMOWP, I'm quite sure I wouldn't be a professional outdoor photographer right now. Photography will probably always remain at the core of the business, and the wonderful outdoors will be the office though I hope soon to complement the photographs with writing.

Writer's Corner

The Frankie Green Rule

Virginia Parker Staat

"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed" ~Ernest Hemingway

Years ago, husband David worked with a fellow by the name of Frankie Green. Frankie was a crusty, hard-nosed, direct man who had worked his way up from the bottom to become a supervisor. Frankie had a way about him, and, to this day, we still use some of his words of wisdom. My most favorite is what we affectionately call The Frankie Green Rule. This rule encompasses any new project: "One way is so good, you'll probably never think of it. One way is so bad, you hope you'll never think of it. And the other eight ways will get you there just fine."

It's a great rule for writing as well. There are many ways to tell your story. Kevin Barrett says "Writing a story means combining five building blocks — character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme — into a structured narrative." Most writers begin with an inciting incident or a point of tension and build from there. Some start with an outline. Others of us just dive right in and clean up the mess later.

We ask ourselves questions: What do we want our readers to gain from reading our work? Are we interested in their gaining knowledge or an emotional connection? Do we want to persuade, inform, or motivate? What evidence will we use? If it's a personal essay or memoir, do we want our story to change our readers' perspective or perception?

We refine our stories during revision and edits, focusing on grammar and punctuation. We read our work aloud to check rhythm and cadence. We compress and massage our words until they become more meaningful.

You'll find your way through your story, not by focusing on a formula, but by following your instincts. Remember Frankie's rule: "One way is so good, you'll probably never think of it. One way is so bad, you hope you'll never think of it. And the other eight ways will get you there just fine."

Member's Favorite Photo



Salmon in Spawning Colors, ©Ron Belak

Long-time member Ron Belak submitted this trout photo as his favorite. Ron writes, "It's hard to pick a favorite photo from tens of thousands that I shot over the last 30 years. However, I do have a memorable fish photo that I snapped in 1997 — before the age of quality digital images. My friend Wayne is displaying an approximately 25-inch rainbow trout in spawning colors. It was the first big fish photo I took and one of the first fish photos I published. I scanned the original 35mm slide as a jpeg and lightly processed it in Lightroom Classic. Yes, you can process jpegs. They just don't have as much data as a RAW file, so you don't get as good results. Many years and many stories later, the trout 'has grown' to almost 30 inches.

Table of Contents

Jack Olson Dies	1
Cochrane Releases New Book	3
Conference Highlights	3
Jack about Jack	5
Jack Olson Photos	4
Member Favorite Photo	6
President's Column	2
What to Bring to Conference	3
Writer's Corner	6