

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

## Upcoming Events

### Election Time!

It's time to elect two new officers (secretary and treasurer) and two new board members. Ballots will be emailed the first week of May and returned by May 31. The newly elected will take office on June 1. Please vote!

### Contest Deadline!!!

Start looking through your 2023 photos and writings! **RMOWP's upcoming contest submission deadline is Monday, July 8, 2024.** Rules and categories can be found with this newsletter and at [rmowp.org](http://rmowp.org).

### Directory Update Time!

RMOWP Treasurer Maryann Gaug will be emailing each member for any changes they may have to the RMOWP Directory. For more information, see the article on Page 8.



## RMOWP Launches New Website

by Steve Cochrane

**E**xciting News! Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers is proud to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website. The website is online now, and we can't wait for you to experience it.

Although the address remains the same [www.rmowp.org](http://www.rmowp.org), the design has been completely revamped to offer a more user-friendly and visually appealing experience. Our new website is designed to attract new members while providing a platform for our current members to display their work. With easy-to-download newsletters and the latest conference news, our members can stay up-to-date with everything happening in the group. Plus, the new website offers writers and photographers the opportunity to learn new techniques and attend zoom presentations by members and industry experts.

We are excited that our new website will offer a seamless experience for our members, allowing them to pay their membership fees and access all the resources they need in one place. We can't wait for you to see the new website.

*A special thanks to our website design committee, including webmaster Steve Cochrane, Debbie Holte, Ron Belak, and Linda Haehnle.*

## President's Column

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Ah yes .... Spring is here!

Daffodils and tulips are blooming, birds are chirping, and the earth is starting to rejoice with warm sunshine and gentle rains. This is the time to look forward to fresh ideas, implementing plans made over the winter, and come alive again with renewed energy and enthusiasm after a restful winter.

RMOWP has exciting things to look forward to this year! First and foremost, we are excited to announce a new website going live in May! Vice President Steve Cochrane and his team have worked diligently to create this new user-friendly communication tool. Please see Steve's announcement on Page One for information and details. Many thanks to Steve and his team!

Additionally, plans continue to be finalized for the annual conference in Ft. Davis, Texas October 1-4, 2024. Virginia and David Staat (Conference Leaders) continue to finalize logistics, details for workshops, things to see and do in the area, and photography sessions to stimulate interest and creativity. This will be a fun and engaging conference and we look forward to seeing "y'all" there!

As a reminder, we'd like to hear from you! Tell us about your writing and photography projects, to include accomplishments and successes, and/or ideas to expand RMOWP connections.

Wishing you all a wonderful spring season! ~Linda



*RMOWP President Linda Haehnle*

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**RMOWP Officers:**

President: Linda Haehnle, Aurora, CO  
Vice President: Steve Cochrane, Rangely, CO  
Secretary: Kent Taylor, Richardson, TX  
Treasurer: Maryann Gaug, Silverthorne, CO

**Board of Directors:**

Ron Belak, Kittredge, CO (2024)  
Debbie Holte, Taos, NM (2024)  
Frank Zurey, Golden, CO (2025)  
Richard Youngblood, Katy, TX (2025)  
Dan Bernskoetter, Lohman, MO (2026)  
Al Perry, Herriman, UT (2026)

## Conference Update

### The Stars at Night Are Big and Bright... Deep in the Heart of Texas!



*Annual Texas Star Party, photo courtesy of Prude Ranch*

barbecue dinner, campfire, s'mores, and, most importantly, our own version of a **Texas Star Party**. The Prude Ranch has been hosting star parties since 1979, and the property is considered one of the top ten star party sites in the world. While most of the Ranch's star parties focus on astronomy and telescopes, RMOWP's star party will focus on astrophotography. The Ranch is rated a Bortle 2 on the dark-sky scale. During the conference, star charts indicate that the Milky Way should be visible over the mountains between 8:00 pm and 10:00 pm, weather permitting.

Prior to the Prude Ranch festivities, our RMOWP conference will host a daytime workshop on astrophotography, focusing on strategies, different levels of techniques, and post processing information. If you're interested in getting a head start, you can find free astronomy software programs like Stellarium or Worldwide Telescope to help with planning.

We hope you'll join us where the stars at night are big and bright... deep in the Heart of Fort Davis, Texas!

One of the highlights of RMOWP's Fort Davis conference will be held at the historic Prude Ranch, located about six miles north of town. Since 1897, the Prude Ranch has been a favorite place of visitors from all over the world.

Established by West Texas pioneers as a cattle ranch, in 1921 the Prude family expanded their offerings to include a guest ranch, hosting cattle drives, trail rides, and children's summer camps. In 1996, the 3,500-acre ranch was designated a historical landmark by the Texas Historical Commission, in an effort to protect and preserve the ranch for future generations.

For RMOWP's conference, the Prude Ranch will provide a hayride,



*Prude Ranch entrance, photo by Virginia Staat*

## Member News

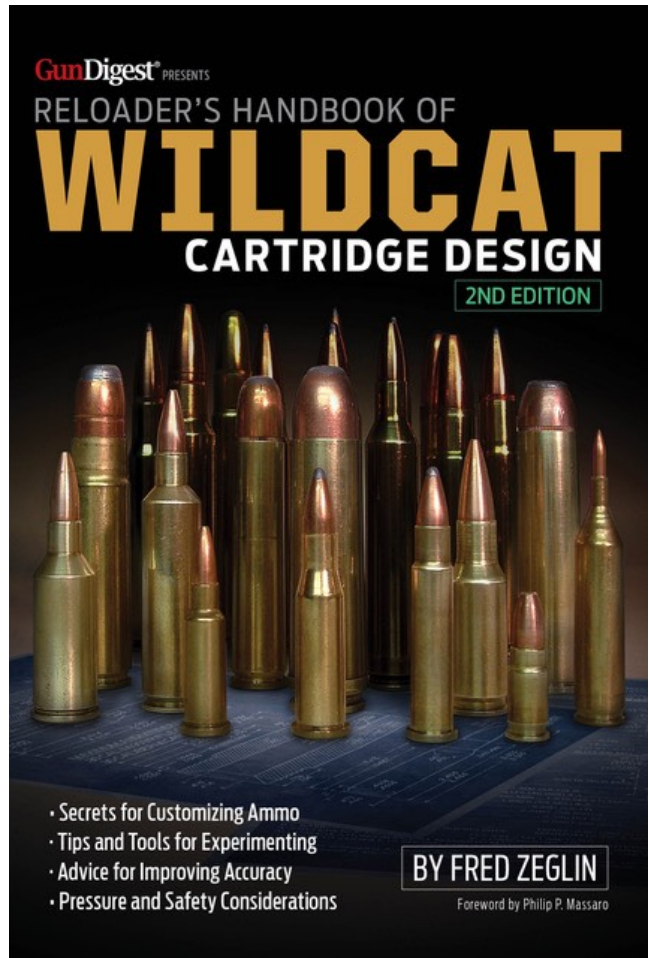


### Bob Bossard Dies

RMOWP member Robert "Bob" Bossard from Dallas died earlier this year. He joined RMOWP for two conferences, Sierra Vista in 2017 and Great Sand Dunes in 2018. He was a retired anesthesiologist who picked up photography enthusiastically in retirement and developed a keen interest in astrophotography.



*Stairway to Heaven by Bob Bossard, won third place scenic in 2018. The photo was taken at Davis Mountain State Park near Fort Davis, Texas*



Longtime RMOWP member **Fred Zeplin** of Kalispell, Montana, has announced a **new book**, "Reloader's Handbook of Wildcat Cartridge Design, 2nd edition," recently published by Gun Digest.

Fred, an author who specializes in books on guns and gunsmithing, says "this comprehensive guide is the ultimate reference for reloaders, offering insights into designing, building, loading, and shooting wildcat cartridges. From the diminutive .10 caliber to the robust .50 cal., the book covers a vast range of calibers, catering to every shooter's preferences."

He adds that the book includes dimensioned drawings and loading data, detailed cartridge descriptions and performance, details on historical wildcat cartridges and new designs, wildcats vs. improved cartridges, tooling and supplies, and wildcatter profiles. See [reamers@4drentals.com](mailto:reamers@4drentals.com) and [www.gunsmithtalk.wordpress.com](http://www.gunsmithtalk.wordpress.com).

## More Member News



Photo by Steve Cochrane

A popular destination for RMOWP travelers is **South Africa**, and member **Steve Cochrane** from Rangely, in northwestern Colorado, will give an exhibit of his recent South African photography and a presentation. The events take place on Summer Solstice weekend, June 21-23, at the Rangely Recreation Center in Rangely, with free admission.

On Friday, June 21, Steve will give a presentation on his wildlife safari experience from 5 to 7 pm. Seats are limited. Sign up through the Blog/Events section on Steve's website, [www.stevecochranephotography.com](http://www.stevecochranephotography.com).

An exhibition of his photos showcasing the beauty and diversity of South Africa's rich wildlife runs Saturday, June 22, from noon to 5pm and Sunday, June 23, from noon to 3pm.

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### Wildlife Journey to South Africa

Join Local Photographer Steve Cochrane  
June 21st-23nd - Free Entry  
Rangely, Colorado Rec Center

**Friday June 21st (5-7pm) Safari Presentation**  
Seating Limited 30 People - Call 970-596-3371 - Registration is Free

#### Photography Gallery - Free Refreshments

Saturday June 22nd (12-5pm)

Sunday June 23rd (12-3pm)

[SteveCochranePhotography.com](http://SteveCochranePhotography.com) - Instagram: @SteveCochranePhoto  
970-596-3371



## RMOWP WELCOMES TWO NEW MEMBERS!

Our newest member is longtime friend Mary Kummerfeldt of Colorado Springs. Mary has been attending conferences with her husband Peter since he joined RMOWP in 2011. Mary joined this year and describes herself as a photographer whose interests include birds, nature photography, and travel.

Also joining this year is Cody Mazur of Mission, Texas, a wildlife photography guide at Santa Clara Ranch in south Texas, owned by RMOWP members Beto and Clare Gutierrez. You can see some of Cody's work on his website at [www.cmazurphotos.com](http://www.cmazurphotos.com).

## Hidden Gems, Off-season Trips Highlights of 325.5 million National Park Visits in 2023

*People are discovering lesser-known parks across the country, regardless of weather.*

WASHINGTON—While overall visitation continues to grow across America's national parks, visitors are increasingly discovering opportunities in less well-known parks and during park off-seasons.

Today, the National Park Service announced that 400 national parks reported a total of 325.5 million recreation visits in 2023, an increase of 13 million or 4% over 2022.

In addition to the continued growth in overall numbers, NPS data shows that visitation is increasing in the more traditional off-seasons at many parks, with more visits in the spring and fall than seen in years past. And 20 parks—many of them less well-known—broke visitation records in 2023.

“From Kaloko Honokōhau National Historic Park in Hawai'i to Congaree National Park in South Carolina, parks are attracting more visitors each year to learn about our shared history,” **National Park Service Director Chuck Sams said.** “Our national parks tell our shared American story. I'm glad visitors are finding hidden gems, exploring in the off-season and finding new ways to have a great time in our national parks.”

Visitation figures and trends guide how the National Park Service manages parks to ensure the best experience possible for park visitors. The [Visitation Statistics Dashboard](#) on [NPS.gov](#) provides recreational visit statistics for every park in the US for 2023 and also for previous years, dating back to 1979 for some parks. Of the 429 parks in the National Park System, 400 parks counted visitors in 2023. For the first time, there are now parks reporting their visitation numbers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four US territories. Five national parks began reporting in 2023, and this is the first year a park from Delaware is included.

The 20 parks that broke visitation records in 2023 are:

- Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site
- Congaree National Park
- Dry Tortugas National Park
- Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area
- Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument
- John Muir National Historic Site
- Joshua Tree National Park
- Kaloko Honokōhau National Historic Park
- Keweenaw National Historic Park
- Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park
- Lincoln Memorial
- Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site
- Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park
- Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Memorial
- Minidoka National Historic Site
- Mojave National Preserve
- New River Gorge National Park & Preserve
- Nez Perce National Historic Park
- Ninety Six National Historic Site



Solar viewing glasses and scopes made for safe viewing of the annular eclipse at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in October 2023.

NPS

Natural disasters and increasingly severe weather events affected visitation at some parks. Summer heat, wildland fires, and storms and natural disasters, floods and landslides required a number of parks to close for periods of time in 2023. Some parks that were impacted include:

- Death Valley National Park was entirely closed August 20 until October 15 due to flood damage.
- Much of the Chilkoot Trail at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Alaska was closed due to flooding in 2023.
- Haleakalā National Park closed the Summit and Kīpahulu districts from August 8 until August 25 due to wildland fires and high winds.

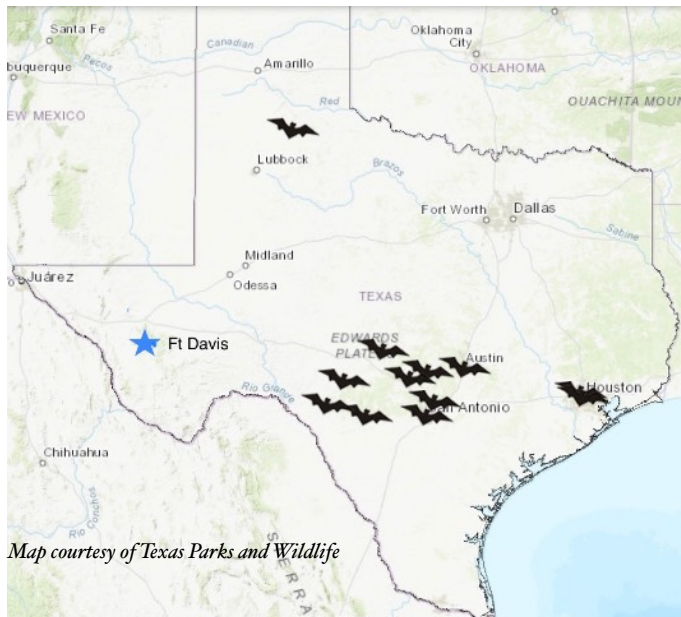
## Set Your Sites on Fort Davis and the Bat Capital of the World!



*Red-tail hawk capturing a Mexican free-tail bat by Al Perry. This photo has received numerous awards, including ICF Pro Tour 2006, finalist in Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2007, and it has been published in Naturescapes, NANPA Expressions (2007), My San Antonio, and Birds and Humans (2008). The photo also won RMOWP's Best of Show in 2008.*

**Did you know that Texas has the largest bat population in the world?** Below are the top, most populated bat viewing sites for you to visit:

- Bracken Cave Preserve with 15 million bats. See <https://www.batcon.org/see-bats-live/visit-bracken-cave-preserve/>



*Map courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife*

- Devil's Sinkhole with 3 million bats. See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/devils-sinkhole.phtml>
- Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve with 4-6 million bats. See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/eckert-james-river.phtml>
- Frio Bat Cave with 10 million bats. See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/frio-bat-cave.phtml>
- Old Tunnel State Park with 3 million bats. See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/old-tunnel.phtml>
- Congress Avenue Bridge with 1.5 million bats. See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/congress-avenue-bridge.phtml>

Mexican free-tail bats migrate in late October, so they should still be visible before or after the Fort Davis conference. For more information about Texas bat viewing sites, bat species, a larger version of the

map, and more, visit <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/bats/bat-watching-sites/>.

**Writer's Corner**



*Popeye Peter, by Virginia Staat*

**A Popeye Moment**

text and photo by  
Virginia Parker Staat

*Storytelling is storytelling. Good stories need compelling characters and interesting conflicts. That's the bottom line no matter what medium you're writing for.*  
~ D.J. MacHale

**W**e meet all sorts of characters during a lifetime. Some stand out more than others. Have you ever considered why even brief encounters become so memorable?

I recall a man who sat next to us at an otherwise empty outdoor cafe on Prince Edwards Island in Canada. He introduced himself as Peter, looked at me, and asked, "Do you know Popeye?"

I nodded. Then he rolled his tongue around in his mouth and grimaced, making a face that looked exactly like the cartoon character. I will never forget him.

As writers, our job is to find a way to introduce our characters and make them sufficiently memorable to bring them to life and captivate our readers. It's what I call a Popeye moment.

We can best do this by finding a single attribute, using dialog, details, personality traits, or actions, like my Popeye Peter. In *Good Prose*, authors Tracy Kidder and Richard Todd remind us, "When we read fictional and factual narratives, we conjure up characters through their deeds: characteristic actions and contradictory actions, behavior in moments of stress, of mastery, of weakness."

Let's look at just a few examples of both nonfiction and fiction character introductions:

- Laura Hillebrand introduces ex-fighter and jockey Red Pollard in her nonfiction book *Seabiscuit*: "His books were the closest thing he had to furniture and he lived in them the way other men live in easy chairs."

David McCullough introduces John Adams in his biography of Adams: "He was a talker. There were some, even among his admirers, who wished he talked less."

My favorite character introduction is from *A Christmas Carol* when Charles Dickens introduces the man named Scrooge: "He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner."

There is nothing vague about these characterization examples. Roy Peter Clark in *Writing Tools* explains, "The best writers create moving pictures of people, images that reveal their characteristics and aspirations, their hopes and fears."

To write a Popeye moment, our characters must create a first impression that rivals those memorable people we have met in our own lives. These characters jump off the page and into our reader's imagination. And like my Popeye Peter, they, too, become unforgettable.

**Directory Update Time!**

Toward the end of April, RMOWP Treasurer Maryann Gaug will send out current directory entry information to each RMOWP member. Please look it over carefully and email any changes back to Maryann. You will be asked if you want a paper copy of the directory, so please respond to that question also.

Responses will be due by May 18. Sometime in June, an updated directory will be snail mailed to those who say they want one. The Board has voted twice to send snail mail directories only — no emailed directories due to security concerns. Directories will be sent every two years.

**DON'T FORGET!!! THE 2024  
RMOWP PHOTO AND WRITING  
CONTEST SUBMISSION  
DEADLINE IS JULY 8. Contest rules  
and entry forms can be found at  
rmowp.org.**