

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

President's Column

Looking toward 2024

Happy New Year to you!

Now that the wonderful flurry of the holidays is behind us, it's time to look forward to the excitement of new adventures and opportunities!

Typically, the New Year begins with resolutions or aspirations to make positive changes in one's life, whether it be personal or professional. But ... how does that segway to our love of photography and creative writing? Are we looking for new ways to 'show' something differently? Are we looking for something to 'feel' more deeply about? Are we interacting with life to 'see' something we haven't seen before? How are we taking our skills and talents to a different level to show our passion to others? All good questions to challenge us moving forward.



President Linda Haehnle

As we continue to transition RMOWP in the new year, I look forward to fresh ideas, positive changes, a commitment to each other, and continuing to be stewards of nature and the great outdoors.

I wish you all good health, comfort and joy, a sense of peace, and a beautiful start to the new year!

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National Park Service Announces 2024 Fee Free Days

This year, or any year for that matter, is a great time to visit America's national parks, and each year the National Park Service gives us a present - about a half dozen days with free admission to park service properties. This year's fee-free days are:

- January 15 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- April 20 - First Day of National Park Week
- June 19th - Juneteenth
- August 4 - Great American Outdoors Day
- September 28 - National Public Lands Day
- November 11 - Veterans Day

“National parks are places that awaken senses, inspire curiosity, encourage reflection, and foster joy,” National Park Service Director Chuck Sams said. The National Park Service operates more than 400 national parks, monuments, historic sites, and other properties, and more than 300 of them do not have entrance fees. For those with entrance fees, charges are between \$10 and \$35, usually per vehicle for up to a week. Fee free days apply only to entrance fees and not user fees for camping, tours, etc.

For additional details and to find a park or two, see www.nps.gov.



2nd Place Natural Phenomena, Emily Harrington,
Mt. Holdsworth Sunrise



2nd Place Scenics, Michael Salomone, Horseshoe
Bend, Lee’s Ferry

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

Send editorial materials to Don Laine, 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.

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2024 Conference Update

Fort Davis, Texas.... Here We Come!

Our Fort Davis conference is beginning to come together. The conference will be held during the new moon, the week of October 3, 2024, to take advantage of the night sky. Below is a list of frequently asked questions about Fort Davis:

- **How far away is Fort Davis?** Fort Davis is an eleven-hour drive due south from Denver, an eight-hour drive from Houston, and a seven-hour drive from Albuquerque or Dallas.
- **Besides driving, what are travel options to get to Fort Davis?** Flights from anywhere in the U.S. arrive in both El Paso and Midland airports. (Fort Davis is a three-hour drive from the El Paso airport and two and one-half hours from the Midland airport.) Additionally, Amtrak’s *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* routes both stop in Alpine, Texas, just 28 miles from Fort Davis.
- **Are Fort Davis accommodations expensive?** Motel rates are very reasonable in Fort Davis, ranging in price from \$79 at the Fort Davis Inn & RV Park to \$112 per night at the historic Hotel Limpia. Camping can also be found at several locations in town as well as the Fort Davis State Park.
- **With the border crisis, is Fort Davis safe?** Yes. Both the Fort Davis police department and the Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce assure us that Fort Davis is safe and that the town has received minimal impact from the border crisis.
- **Are there any other attractions to see beyond Fort Davis?** Yes! Over the next few months, we’ll give a detailed list of options. For starters, three national parks are close to Fort Davis, including Carlsbad Caverns National Park (less than three hours), Guadalupe Mountains National Park (two hours), and Big Bend National Park (two hours). Texas is home to 16 national parks, monuments, historic sites, and national seashores. The state also boasts 76 state parks, 10 wildlife refuges, four national forests, and one state forest, combining to encompass over 580,000 acres of land.

There’s something for everyone in Texas. Your stop at the RMOWP conference in Fort Davis is just the beginning!



Target: Fort Davis, Texas

Writer's Corner

To Write Like a Texan

by Virginia Parker Staat

“If you use a colloquialism or a slang word or phrase, simply use it; do not draw attention to it by enclosing it in quotation marks. To do so is to put on airs, as though you were inviting the reader to join you in a select society of those who know better.”

-William Strunk, Jr.

I've been teased for my Texas drawl and colloquialisms for most of my adult life, particularly during the time we lived in four other states and a foreign country. I remember teaching a computer class years ago in Mississippi. When it came time to explain to my befuddled students how to correct an error, I had to spell it out because they simply couldn't decipher what I was saying. “You delete the error — E-R-R-O-R — by depressing the arrow — A-R-R-O-W — key.”

Plus, I married a Yankee. David is from Wisconsin. A Midwestern accent has been dubbed as the most understandable. When we were dating, David would chuckle when I said I was fixing to do something. Or when I pronounced window (which always comes out as wind-ah). In his defense, however, even I thought that barbed wire was spelled bob-wire for most of my childhood based on how my fellow Texans pronounced it. In our long and lustrous marriage, however, I am happy to report that David has come from the dark side and now pronounces pecan correctly (not pea-can, which makes my skin crawl).

Texans also have a tendency to splatter our drawl with unique colloquialisms found only in the Lone Star State. Here are a few examples:

- You could strap a wet dog to that man's face, and he'd still look good.
- He's all hat and no cattle.
- It's so dry, the trees are bribing the dogs.
- He can strut sitting down.
- He's slicker than a slop jar.
- Don't squat on them spurs.
- Dance with the one who brung you.

When we write, capturing colloquial speech can be difficult. As an example, some choose to write their dialog phonetically. Writing phonetically is called eye dialect and can be extremely difficult and tedious for our readers. The Grammarly blog explains eye dialect as “the practice of writing out characters' mispronunciations phonetically, like writing ‘wuz’ for ‘was.’ Eye dialect can be (and

has been) used to create offensive caricatures, and even when it's not used in this manner, it can make dialogue difficult for readers to understand. Certain well-known instances of eye dialect, like ‘fella’ for ‘fellow’ and ‘em’ for ‘them,’ are generally deemed acceptable, but beyond these, it's often best to avoid it.”

Instead of eye dialect, writers must turn to speech patterns, idioms, and colloquialisms. There are few writers, in my humble opinion, who excel at capturing speech patterns and colloquialisms as perfectly as Mark Twain and Eudora Welty.

Here's an example of Twain's colloquial Missouri speech from *Huckleberry Finn*. “The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out.” (In this example, Twain uses double negatives and the misspelling of *civilized* to characterize Huck's lack of education.)

Eudora Welty perfectly captured lowland Mississippi speech patterns even in her prose. (My favorite is Welty's short story *Why I Live at the PO*.) As an example of how she intertwines speech patterns in prose, Welty opens *The Whistle*, “Night fell. The darkness was thin, like some sleazy dress that had been worn and worn for many winters and always lets the cold through to the bones. Then the moon rose. A farm lay quite visible, like a white stone in water, among the stretches of deep woods in their colorless dead leaf.”

When we write as deliberately as Mark Twain and Eudora Welty, paying attention to every word, truly capturing speech patterns, and focusing on colloquialisms, our readers are enriched. It is an intimate, conversational writing style that draws readers in and keeps them connected to the end of our story. Now that'll snap anybody's garters... sure as shooting.



2nd Place, Kent Taylor, White Lotus

Member News & Texas Rock Art



Longtime friend of RMOWP Thomas Trowbridge "Trobe" Grose of Golden, Colorado, died September 13, at the age of 98. Survivors include his wife of 18 years, longtime RMOWP member Cecilia Travis of Golden, plus a sister, two children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Trobe served in the Pacific Theater in the Navy during World War II as an aerologist third class, and after the war studied petroleum geology, earning a Ph.D in geology from Stanford University in 1955. He taught at Colorado College and the Colorado School of Mines, retiring as Professor Emeritus, and did consulting work in the U.S., Australia, and Peru.

RMOWP members will remember Trobe from conferences he attended with Cecilia, and especially for the talk he gave at our Yellowstone conference in 2010, explaining exactly what was happening down below the earth's surface. His honors include the Thomas Dibblee Award for Excellence in Field Geology and Mapping, and he was named the 2002 Outstanding Scientist by Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists. Cecilia told us that Trobe continued to publish maps well into his 90's.

The finest workers in stone are not copper or steel tools, but the gentle touches of air and water working at their leisure with a liberal allowance of time.

~ Henry David Thoreau.



RMOWP member Frank Zurey keeps winning photography awards at galleries across Colorado and elsewhere, including this from Lincoln Gallery in Loveland. Frank tells us, "This beautiful Caracara in flight, photographed at the Santa Clara Ranch in south Texas, took second place."

Set Your Sights on Fort Davis!

Look for this title in upcoming newsletters to learn more about attractions near Fort Davis.

Did you know that Texas has an amazing number of petroglyphs and pictographs, some dating over 5,000 years old? Harry Shafer, curator of archeology at San Antonio's Witte Museum says, "This is one of the most incredible archeological resources in North America."

Here's a list of public archeological sites to visit:

- Amistad National Recreation Area (see <https://www.nps.gov/amis/learn/historyculture/howtorockart.htm>). A three-hour drive from Fort Davis, Amistad's Panther Cave contains floor-to-ceiling pictographs.
- Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site (see <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/hueco-tanks>). Also a three-hour drive from Fort Davis, Hueco Tanks boasts over 3,000 pictographs and petroglyphs.
- Seminole Canyon State Park and Historical Site (see <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/seminole-canyon>). Also three-hours from Fort Davis, provides guided 90-minute tours to view over 200 pictographs.

Private archaeological sites in Texas can also be visited with reservations, including Paint Rock, Shumia Treks, and White Shaman Preserve.

Join us in Fort Davis next October and become a bonafide petroglyph rock star!

Happy 50th Birthday

Happy 50th to the Endangered Species Act!

Just over 50 fifty years ago, on December 28, 1973, President Richard Nixon signed into law the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which the United States' Supreme Court described as "the most comprehensive legislation for the preservation of endangered species enacted by any nation."

The law, which passed the U.S. Senate unanimously and the House 345 to 4, protects threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats where they are found. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service created and maintain lists of endangered and threatened species, including birds, insects, fish, reptiles, mammals, crustaceans, flowers, grasses, and trees.

The law requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize listed species and their habitats, and with a few exceptions prohibits importing or exporting listed species. This was a reversal of federal policy, which until then had encouraged killing certain species for "predator control" to protect livestock, game, and agriculture.

Although there have been attempts to weaken the law, with opponents claiming it infringes on private property rights and damages industries including mining, logging, and drilling for oil and gas, proponents say the act has saved hundreds of plant and animal species from becoming extinct. For more information, photos, videos, and even a downloadable coloring book, see www.fws.gov.



3rd Place Published Works, Dan Bernskoetter,
Widow Skimmer Dragonfly

Be Sure to Join the GBBC February 16-19!



Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19, 2024

Time to Re-Up!

The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things... including your RMOWP dues.

By mid-January, Treasurer Maryann Gaug will be emailing membership renewals to those whose memberships are expiring. Please remember that dues were raised a bit at the October Board meeting. Sorry, but it was necessary. New dues amounts are as follows:

- Individual: 1 year = \$70; 2 years = \$135; 3 years = \$195.
- Two people at the same address: 1 year = \$130; 2 years = \$250; 3 years = \$360.
- Student: \$15 per year (must be a full-time student regardless of age).

Also new this year, due to increases in printing and postage costs, anyone wanting to receive a newsletter via snail mail will be required to pay \$20 per year to cover the costs of the six newsletters.

Questions, contact Maryann at meaug@earthlink.net.