

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers



Fort Davis, Texas, Here We Come!

The dates have been set. RMOWP will hold its 2024 conference in Fort Davis from Tuesday through Friday, October 1-4. During the conference, we will meet during the new moon and highlight astrophotography, under some of the darkest skies in the world.

Fort Davis is a historic West Texas town with a population of just over 900 people. The original Fort Davis site was built in 1854 to protect the San Antonio-El Paso road. It was also home to Buffalo Soldiers and the infamous Texas Camel Brigade. Today the town has been recognized as the highest town in Texas, with an elevation 5,050 feet. It continues to embrace its historic roots with a western flare.

Our conference headquarters will be the Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. While it is, perhaps, an odd venue choice, the Hall will serve our purposes perfectly. It has a 12-foot projector screen that our illustrious computer guru, Frank Zurey, will use to display this year's best photos. The church's gracious members have offered to let those of us who have self-contained rigs to dry camp (boondock) in their parking lot for free. The Hall is on one level, has a commercial kitchen, and ADA bathrooms with showers. Perhaps best of all, they have padded chairs for our comfort.

During our stay in Fort Davis, participants will enjoy the splendor of the Davis Mountain Sky Island, boasting Mount Livermore (8,300 elevation), the second tallest peak in Texas. The area is known for over 400 species of birds and the greatest concentration of black bears and cougars in Texas. Barbary sheep, Mule deer, elk, Pronghorn antelope, and javelina are also plentiful. A road trip around the 75-mile Davis Mountain Loop is sure to delight. We are planning field trips to the Chihuahua Desert Research Institute, a ranger-led walk and talk at Davis Mountain State Park, and a nighttime Sky Party. We will provide a complete schedule in the next few months.

Be sure to check out Page 3 and 4 of this newsletter for information about accommodation choices. We can't wait to see you there!

Conference Update

RMOWP 2024 Conference Accommodations

Fort Davis Motels and Hotels

- The *Harvard Hotel* is located downtown and about three blocks from our meeting area. All rooms have king beds. There are two rooms with a balcony overlooking the downtown area, priced at \$130 a night. The interior rooms are priced at \$110. All rooms are upstairs, but there is an elevator... the only elevator in Fort Davis. The former owners are selling the hotel the first of April, so be sure to check back on room rates if you are booking after April 1. (See <https://harvardhotelandlodge.com/>)
- The *Butterfield Inn* and *Mountainside Inn* are both under the same management. Contact number 432-426-3252. The Butterfield Inn is downtown and four blocks from our meeting area. (See <https://www.butterfieldinn.com/>)
- The *Mountainside Inn* is located at the base of Sleeping Lion Mountain and is across town from our meeting area, approximately one-half mile away. The main house has five rooms with king beds and bath. The motel is very nice, clean, and some rooms have small sitting areas overlooking the backyard and Fort Davis National Historic Site park grounds. All rooms share a common living room and kitchen. Rooms are \$110 to \$140 per night. The owner will rent whole house for \$500 per night. (See <https://www.mountainsideinntx.com/>)
- The *Hotel Limpia* is a historic hotel downtown about three blocks from our meeting area. The main hotel has upstair rooms and no elevator. Rates are around \$180 per night. Behind the hotel is the Orchard House which is all on the ground floor. These rooms have kitchens and cost around \$200 per night. They are starting a renovation on these buildings the first of May but hope to be finished in three months or so. There is a third building across the main street and has rooms upstairs, no elevator. Rates are about \$150. (See <https://www.hotellimpia.com/>)
- The *Fort Davis Inn and RV park* is about three miles from downtown. It is a nice, clean, modest motel all on one floor, making for easy unloading. Room rates begin at \$85 per night. (See <https://ftdavisinn.com/>)
- The *Stone Village Tourist Camp* is about six blocks from our meeting area. They have low budget accommodations with a rustic ambiance. The rooms are clean and well kept with queen or king beds. The hotel is built from cinder block and stone, so it stays cool during hot weather. Rooms run from \$80 to \$120. They also have a unique experience — maybe a throwback to your younger days when you had little money and slept in hostels. They rent eight camp rooms with a screen door to keep out the bugs and a curtain for privacy. These rooms have no HVAC, but the stone walls help to control the temperature. There are two single beds in each room and enough space for a backpack. All camp rooms share a community bath area with showers with one area for men and one for women. Cost is \$45 a night. (See <https://www.stonevillagetouristcamp.com/>)
- The *Mountainview Lodge* is located a mile south of town on Highway 118. They have several modular cabins with full size beds. The bathrooms are extremely small. Although they boast a kitchenette, the sink doubles as the lavatory and the only appliances are a microwave and mini-fridge. Prices range from \$129 to \$199 per night. The facility does include a very popular cafe that is open for breakfast and lunch. (See <https://mountainviewlodgetx.com/>)
- The *Historic Prude Ranch* is located about six miles north of Fort Davis on Highway 118. The setting will remind you of a 1890s working ranch. Rooms are rustic and worn and all have stairs leading to a landing and porch. The staff is helpful and courteous. Prices range from \$129 per night to \$249 for a two-bedroom suite. (See <https://www.prude-ranch.com/>)
- The historic *Indian Lodge* at Davis Mountain State Park on Highway 118, unfortunately, is closed for refurbishing. It may, however, open prior to the RMOWP conference. (See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/indian-lodge>)

(RV Parks are listed on Page 3)

Conference Update

RMOWP 2024 Conference Accommodations (continued)

Fort Davis RV Parks

- There are two large parking areas next to our meeting area at the Methodist church Fellowship Hall. We have permission to boondock (dry camp) for the duration of the conference. There are no water or hookups, but those who have a self-contained rig can park for free.
- *Davis Mountain RV Park* is clean and recommended. It is located on Highway 17 and about three miles north of town. (See <https://davismountainrvpark.com/>)
- *Prude Ranch* is a historic ranch about six miles out of town on Highway 118. They have a nice RV park with all the ambiance of a 1890s working ranch. They also have a great area for night sky photography. (See <https://www.prunderanch.com/>)
- *Davis Mountain State Park* is about eight miles out of town on Hwy 118. It is a very nice park that will accommodate all types of camping, from motorhomes to tent, including full hookups, electric sites, and primitive camping with water only. The bath houses have showers. There are bird blinds for photographers to use, an interpretive center, lots of hiking trails, and a scenic drive to a lookout where you can view the town. (See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/davis-mountains>)



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, 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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Writer's Corner

All Things Dead

by Virginia Parker Staat

"I like good strong words that mean something." ~Louisa May Alcott, Little Women

It is a rather macabre scene... a pile of animal body parts stacked in the middle of my kitchen floor. The pieces include a duck head, torn legs from both an elephant and lamb, the headless body of a goose, a flat hedgehog, and a sloth with one eye missing, all heaped upon enormous puffs of stuffing.

Once every few months, we cull through Sam's toys and toss the mauled victims that have succumbed to her tugging, chewing, and rambunctious dog play. It reminds me of the 1987 movie *Roxanne* and the taxidermist's shop named *All Things Dead*. I even feel something like a taxidermist when I retrieve the mostly-intact sloth and sew its gaping eye socket closed, using dental floss as reinforcing thread. Hopefully, the sloth will last another month or two.

The practice of culling dead things is also important in our writing. Perhaps you remember the grade school writing lesson to eliminate dead words. As writers, it is a lesson we should revisit often.

Dead words are words that are so overused that they have lost their impact. In the movie *Roxanne*, Steve Martin's character gives a soliloquy to his love interest that explains the danger of using dead words. He says, "they have all been wasted... on shampoo commercials and the ads and the flavorings. Hollow, beautiful words. How can you love a floor wax? How can you love a diaper? How can I use the same word about you that is used about a stuffing?"

A quick internet search will offer the top 10 or 50 or 103 dead words that we should eliminate from our writing. Words on the list include very, good, bad, happy, sad, great, really, amazing, always, and never, and almost all adverbs. There is even a dead word poster that you can print and hang over your computer to remind you to cull these words from your writing.

The problem with dead words is that they are vague and carry little emotion. Gary Provost in *Make Every Word Count* tells us, "If the word is doing some work, such as providing needed information, creating a clearer picture, or reminding the reader of something important, then let it stay. But if it's lazy, not earning its keep, throw it out."

As an example, in the movie *Roxanne*, rather than saying I love you, Steve Martin's character says, "I am in orbit around you." It is a profound statement that speaks to his love interest being the center of his universe. It is descriptive and passionate. It speaks volumes more than the overused word love.

When we write strong words, we engage our readers and tug at their emotions. We elevate our message and make it clearer and stronger. As Gary Provost reminds us, "When you spot the redundancy or weed out the wasted word, you feel clever. You feel like a writer." And that is a great feeling, indeed.



Sam and her one-eyed sloth

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE UPCOMING TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE!

On April 8, 2024, many of us will be able to see the last total solar eclipse until 2044. For times and the eclipse map, go to <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/map/2024-april-8>.

Member News

North to Alaska!

A group of RMOWP members (and possibly others) are planning an Alaska excursion this summer and have a few open slots available.

Organizer Frank Zurey tells us, "We are planning an Alaska trip to photograph or just view whales and black bears, and although all of the details are not yet finalized, the current schedule is to leave Denver for Juneau on a 6 am flight on July 11 and return to Denver from Wrangell on Sunday July 21 at 12:18 pm."

He says the group will fly to Hoonah from Juneau for whale-watching/photographing on July 12, leave Hoonah on July 18, and fly to Wrangell for the bear tour on the 19th. The flight to Seattle leaves Wrangell at 4:10 pm on July 21. Participants would spend the night in Seattle and fly back to Denver Sunday morning the 21st.

Frank adds that when they get to Hoonah they plan to go fishing so they will have fresh halibut and salmon for their stay, and they are bringing a chef to prepare meals while in Hoonah. Four whale photographing days are planned, with whale watching for six people per day. They have rented a lodge in Hoonah and will be in hotels the other nights.

Current cost estimate per person from Denver is \$5,500 for double occupancy at the hotels or \$6,600 for single occupancy, which includes all air fares.

The following is a link to a video of the whales that member Deanna Harrington took with her phone:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0utFP4vGzsSf6zxL8ZFV2auRXpPgYoR4nNzWZxMhtasJS4YIvyYbCyCzHqhNhuzPdl&id=100065528707902

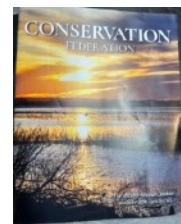
Those interested in joining the group should contact Frank at frank@zureyphoto.com.



2020 RMOWP first place photo taken near

Hoonah, Alaska, by Frank Zurey

Longtime RMOWP member Dan Bernskoetter of Lohman, Missouri, has been very busy. He has two magazine covers and several awards already this year. To see more of Dan's work, visit www.MoOutdoorPhotography.com.



Dan received two first place and one second place Photo of the Year awards for 2023 entries.

Set Your Sights on Fort Davis!



Photo courtesy Davis Mountain Nut House

Did you know that Texas is the Pecan Capital of the world? For the best of the best in all things pecan, we invite you to visit the Davis Mountain Nut Company in downtown Fort Davis. In addition to dry, roasted pecans, they offer twelve flavors of pecans, including praline, hot and spicy, mocha madness, jalapeño, cinnamon glazed, and chocolate fudge. Each flavor is lovingly made in a small, controlled batch. In a word... YUM!

For all things pecan, this is a must stop when you visit Fort Davis.

Colorado Gets a New Historical Site



Granada Relocation Center, Amache, Colorado.

The National Park Service has announced the establishment of Amache National Historic Site in southeastern Colorado, where more than 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry, most of them U.S. citizens, were incarcerated during World War II. At its peak population in 1943 it housed 7,310 individuals, making it the tenth largest city in Colorado.

Amache, also known as the Granada Relocation Center, was one of ten incarceration sites established by the federal government to house Japanese Americans and those of Japanese ancestry, who were forcibly removed from their homes on the West Coast during the war because the government feared they would support Japan in the war.

"Amache's addition to the National Park System is a reminder that a complete account of the nation's history must include our dark chapters of injustice," National Park Service Director Chuck Sams said.

The original buildings were removed or demolished after Amache closed in 1945, but the original building foundations and road network remain, and there is also an historic cemetery, a monument, and several reconstructed and restored structures, including a guard tower and barrack, according to the park service.

A self-guided driving and audio tour is available and the Amache Preservation Society (amache.org) provides interpretative tours and operates a museum in the nearby community of Granada. Information about the historic site is also available at www.nps.gov/amch.

Membership Renewal Time

RMOWP treasurer Maryann Gaug emailed membership renewal reminders on Feb. 15 to those she had not yet received renewals from. If you don't intend to renew, please let her know at megaug@earthlink.net or else she will call you in March for a status report (in case your email was lost in the bit bucket somewhere). Anyone not renewing by March 31 will be dropped from membership on April 1, 2024. We hope that you renew and join us at our annual conference in Fort Davis, Texas, in October!

President's Column

by Linda Haehnle

Greetings! Winter is upon us — even though it's just plain crazy! One day it's cold and snowy, and then there is a warming spell with mild temps and sunshine. It's difficult to think of winter being a dormant season, letting us rest, while planning for spring and beyond, when our environment is constantly changing. Although, maybe that is the point to consider.

As I've talked with several of you, I've been excited to hear about projects in the works!

From writing a children's book, to reflecting on life's opportunities by journaling and photography, to writing travel articles of interest, restarting the writers' group, travel plans, and photography of migrating birds — there's a lot of activity to nurture our creative spirits!

I love it — and would very much enjoy hearing from more of you about projects that you are enjoying. Please reach out to me!

I myself have taken several photography workshops on 'seeing' the world around me from a different perspective. From the fascination and magic of macro, to creating dramatic photos in black and white, it's been a learning and stimulating experience. We'll see how I can incorporate that into my photography compositions.

Hoping all is well with each of you — and just think, Spring is around the corner!

Nature is my muse, and it's been my passion.
~Franz Lanting