

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

A Newsletter for Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers

NEWS & EVENTS

Contest Entry Deadline extended to July 22!

Frank is giving us a few more weeks! RMOWP's upcoming contest submission deadline is now scheduled for **Monday, July 22, 2024**. See rmowp.org for contest rules and entry forms.

Election Results

RMOWP's officer election results have been tallied. We welcome June Wolfe and David Staat to the RMOWP Board of Directions. Congratulations also to Maryann Gaug who will continue as Treasurer and to Kent Taylor who will continue as secretary.

With this election, two of our Board members completed their terms.. We wish to thank Debbie Holte and Ron Belak for their time, talent, dedication, and service.

2024 Conference Registration Open Soon

Registration for RMOWP's conference in Fort Davis, Texas, will open soon. The conference will be held October 1-4, 2024. Conference schedule and registration forms will be emailed in the next few weeks or visit rmowp.org. Be sure to join us!



Lee Hoy

Conference News

RMOWP is honored to welcome Lee Hoy to our upcoming October conference in Fort Davis, Texas. Lee will offer a night sky photography workshop for RMOWP on Wednesday afternoon, October 2.

Lee is an award-winning nature photographer, international and domestic workshop leader, and online training and webinar instructor. He is a senior photography instructor at Wildside Nature Tours and hosts an active YouTube Channel called *Lee Hoy Photography*.

Lee also serves as a photography instructor for Precision Camera and Video in both Austin and Houston, and he is an OM (Olympus-Maitani) System Ambassador. Lee's work, tips, and techniques have been featured in a variety of media, including *Landscape Photography* magazine, *B&H eXplora*, North America Nature Photography Association (NANPA) podcasts, and he is a regular contributor to *Journal of Wildlife Photography*.

Lee's goal is to help us make the most of our nature photography experiences. He lives near Fort Davis and is an avid birder, macro enthusiast, and landscape, wildlife, and night sky photographer. To learn more about Lee, please visit his website at <https://leehoyphotography.com/>.



Rio Grande Points the Way to the Milky Way by Lee Hoy

Writer's Corner

by Virginia Parker Staat

*Courage is the most important of all virtues, because without courage
you can't practice any other virtue consistently. ~Maya Angelou*

When it comes to publishing our writings, we often sabotage ourselves. We procrastinate or get distracted. We delay ever taking that next step. As Jackie Johansen says, "When we approach publishing, we often experience doubt, fear, insecurity and all the other difficult feelings that come with opening ourselves up to feedback from others."

My challenge to each of you, my writing friends, is to take that next step this summer. Look over your essays and articles. Find one that matches the guidelines to one of the following magazines or journals... they are all currently accepting submissions. Then, send your writing to them.

- *Deep Wild* publishes creative work "inspired by journeys to places where there are no roads." They are looking for poetry, fiction, and narrative nonfiction (3,000 word limit). (See <https://deepwildjournal.com/>)
- *Future Fire* welcomes any socially-progressive writing that seeks to imagine possible futures. (See <http://futurefire.net/>)
- *High Country News* magazine highlights "the ongoing story of the modern American West through coverage of its environment, natural resources ... in the belief that the West holds lessons of national and global importance." Editors are looking for "sophisticated storytelling" that studies people and landscapes across Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, and the High Plains. (See <https://www.hcn.org/>)
- *National Wildlife Federation* is looking for articles that "focus on wildlife and environmental issues, primarily within North America. Nearly all articles are written by freelance writers. We seek a diversity of voices and perspectives, and we welcome story ideas from all potential contributors." (See <https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/Writer-Guidelines>)
- *Orion Magazine* is looking for both visual and storytelling submissions. They will be open to mushroom essay submissions from July 15-30, 2024. (See <https://orionmagazine.org>)
- *Outside* "publishes stories about adventure sports, gear, travel, fitness, health, culture, and the environment. We're always on the lookout for reporting, essays, service pieces, and media reviews focused on the outdoor world." (See <https://www.outsideonline.com/magazine/contact-us/how-to-pitch-freelance-outside-magazine/>)
- *Terrain* publishes both established nature writers and new voices on a rolling basis on their website. They accept articles and reviews, poetry, essays, and short fiction of up to 6K words. As a journal about place, they welcome stories that explore urban as well as natural landscapes. (See <https://www.terrain.org/submit/>)

I'm rooting for you. ~Virginia

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Past President: Virginia Staat, The Woodlands, TX

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Dan Bernskoetter, Lohman, MO (2026)
Al Perry, Herriman, UT (2026)
June Wolfe, Mesa, Arizona (2027)
David Staat, The Woodlands, TX (2027)

More Conference News

Field Trip, Birding, and Night Sky Photography at the Davis Mountain State Park



Skyline Drive, Davis Mountain State Park, photo courtesy Texas Parks & Wildlife

One of our planned field trips during RMOWP’s upcoming conference will be held at Davis Mountain State Park and led by Park Ranger Charlie Ewing. Charlie will take us on a Sky Island Nature Walk on Skyline Drive. This easy walk along the park’s most famous viewpoints will introduce us to sky islands and the unique flora and fauna surrounding the area. We will arrive at 9 am for the tour, which will last until 11 am. Afterwards, participants will have an hour to enjoy the park’s Interpretative Center and bird blinds.

Davis Mountain State Park is considered a birding hotspot, boasting over 365 species of birds (see <https://birdinghotspots.org/hotspot/L18976002>). The park has two exceptional bird blinds for visitors to photograph and

observe the many bird visitors.

Additionally, the park is known for its night sky photography. To stay in the park after ten o’clock in the evening, visitors must pay the \$6 day pass fee, plus an additional \$3 for a late night pass. Passes are available at the park headquarters as you enter. If you have a Texas State Park pass, the day pass fee is free but the additional \$3 late night pass is additional. (For those expecting to enter a Texas state park more than seven times during the year, the \$70 Texas State Park pass will save you money.)



Night Sky photo near Skyline Drive, Davis Mountain State Park, photo courtesy Texas Parks & Wildlife



Photos of Davis Mountain State Park bird blinds by Virginia Staat



RMOWP Welcomes Writing Workshop Leader Larry Francell



Larry Francell

RMOWP is delighted to announce that Larry Francell will lead the writing workshop, *Getting It Right: Adventures in Local History*, during our upcoming Fort Davis conference. Larry is a much sought-after speaker

in the Fort Davis area. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Austin College and a Master of Arts in History from the University of Texas at Austin. He began a fifty year museum career at Fort Davis National Historic Site, where he still volunteers. He is the former director of the Museum of the Big Bend at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas.

Larry and wife Beth, a landscape designer and artist, returned to Fort Davis in 1996 and restored the family home. Larry spent twenty years in county government as county commissioner and county judge. He has written extensively on local history, including *Fort Lancaster: Texas Frontier Sentinel*, *How Indian Emily Saved Fort Davis*, *What's in a Name: Why Fort Davis was Named for Jefferson Davis and why the Name Was Never Changed*. His most recent work is *My Summer Vacation: The Historic Campaign Journal of Robert Grierson, 1880*.

In his workshop, Larry will offer stories and examples of how he pieced his research into his books. He will discuss writing local history and finding and using photographs as interpretive guides.

Larry also hopes that some of you will join him on a tour of his favorite place, Fort Davis National Historic Site. The tour will be an alternative to RMOWP's Davis Mountain Conservancy tour. Both are scheduled for Thursday, October 3, at 9:30 am.

Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher.
~William Wadsworth

Member News



Humpback Whales Bubble Net Feeding by Frank Zurey

The Colorado Photographic Arts Center (CPAC) has chosen RMOWP member Frank Zurey's photo of humpback whales bubble net feeding for the CPAC 61st Annual Member's Show. Frank's image is also being used for all pre-show advertising.

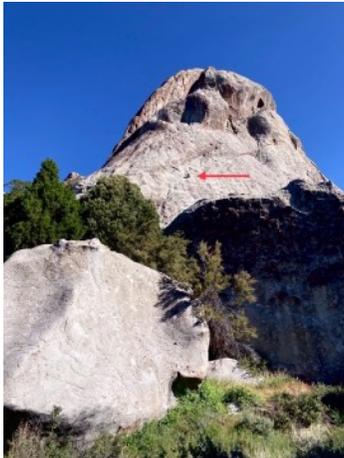
The Member's Show opening reception was held Saturday, June 29, at the Colorado Photographic Arts Center, 1200 Lincoln Street, Suite 111, Denver, Colorado. The show highlights works by 53 members and runs from June 28 until August 10, 2024. All events are free and open to the public.

RMOWP welcomes two new members, or maybe we should say returning members. **Katee and Emily Harrington** of Golden, Colorado, are granddaughters of longtime RMOWP member Frank Zurey and daughters of member Deanna Harrington, we welcome them back.

Katee is a student member currently studying for her master's degree. She is a photographer and has gone to Alaska to photograph whales and bears, and this spring went to Santa Clara Ranch in Texas to photograph wildlife. Emily also lists photography among her skills and interests, especially Alaska bears and whales, along with Alaska and Colorado scenery and using AI for image editing, "especially blurry edges."

A Walk Among Castles

text and photos by Maryann Gaug



Arrow points to climber on Castle Rock

Driving into Castle Rocks State Park, in the middle of seemingly nowhere in south central Idaho, I marveled at the beauty of the castles and pinnacles of granite reaching up to the sky, bordered by green ranch fields and high hills with snowdrifts lingering below the ridges.

After driving past City of Rocks National Preserve and Castle Rocks signs on I-84 over several years, I finally made plans to visit and explore these unknown-to-me places. I reserved a pleasant campsite snuggled in the trees in the state park's Smoky Mountain campground. My first exploration would be the Backyard Boulders Trail and maybe another loop. I parked near the large monolith called Castle Rock. Rock climbers with all their hardware and ropes headed up the trail. I was the lone hiker.

Never fear, down the trail I went past wild iris, unknown flowers, lots of sagebrush, piñon pine, and juniper trees. With the trail guide, I found Shock and Awe Shelter where people stayed around 660 CE, per archaeological evidence. (Note: CE stands for Common Era, same time period as AD). Some of the shelter's side walls were black from cooking fires.

Continuing along, fast quick brake for snake across the trail. Oval head, not a pit viper; skinny tail, no rattles; a bull snake. Whew! I carefully walked around the tail, then took a photo when I was past.

Ahead was a gigantic granite bread loaf hunk that had panholes (an eroded shallow depression in the top of a rock), one of which supposedly holds water from rain and snow. A nearby rock formation reminded me of a barking dog, its chest full of honeycomb weathering. He howled toward the large green hills with snowdrifts.

As I hiked, birds happily twittered. Don't know what birds, but I enjoyed their cheerful songs. I watched small sagebrush voles scurry along their trails in the grass to hide under sagebrush as I approached.

Next I arrived at a pictograph site. The ancient peoples had painted three red designs on the sheltered rock wall ever so long ago. Luckily someone had taken special enhanced photos of them for the interpretive sign. I found the faint symbols.

A loop trail took me toward other granite monoliths and pinnacles. Ravens made a ruckus somewhere in the cliffs, while turkey vultures circled overhead. Along the way, a prickly pear cactus showed off its lone magenta blossom, while other buds waited their turns.

As the trail returned to the parking lot, I wandered through a small aspen grove along a little creek. I completed my circumnavigation of Castle Rock.

What a special place I had found in a far-off section of Idaho!



Castle Rock State Park



*Scenes along
Castle Rock
State Park
hikes.*





Peter Kummerfeldt

Peter K's Survival Tips: Lightning Incident

by Peter Kummerfeldt

Mary and I were testing our new Hyde Drift boat on the South Fork of the Snake River northeast of Idaho Falls during the afternoon of September 1st last year. We had just launched the boat and drifted about half-a-mile down river from Twin Bridges when a severe thunderstorm developed. We pulled over against a high bank under some Cottonwood trees and allowed the storm to pass downriver from our position. We watched intense in-cloud and cloud-to-ground lightning for approximately 15 minutes before continuing our float.

Later that evening in Idaho Falls the TV news reported that a fishing guide had been hit by lightning earlier that afternoon while drifting the Snake River. Several days passed before I was able to track down the guide and learn what had happened. In addition to talking to him he also filled out a questionnaire I that I sent to him — the questions and the guide's answers follow. The italics are mine.

Questionnaire

- **Where did the incident take place?** South Fork of the Snake between Twin Bridges and the Lorenzo Bridge. (*This section of the Snake is about forty minutes northeast of Idaho Falls*)
- **What time did the incident take place?** Approximately 3:30 pm
- **Describe the surrounding area i.e. trees, open fields, park etc.** Immature Cottonwood trees line the river with open farmland beyond the trees. (*This stretch of the river is approximately 50 – 60 yards wide*)
- **What activity was taking place at the time of the incident?** We (*Guide and two 60-year-old clients from Pennsylvania*) had stopped fishing and were rowing to the takeout point at Lorenzo.
- **Were you aware of the approaching storm?** Yes
- **Did you think you were in danger?** Yes. The storm cell looked more severe than the average thunderstorms we had been seeing.
- **Did you consider any other action other than continuing down the river?** Yes. We had slowed up several times during the day to let thunderstorms slide by. There was no avoiding this cell. I made the choice to go ahead and push through it. It turned out to be the wrong move.
- **What do you remember about the strike?** Nothing. When I came to I didn't know what had happened to me. (*The guide had no recollection of being hit and regained consciousness lying in the bottom of the boat*)
- **Were you struck by the lightning directly or do you think the lightning struck nearby and traveled through the ground or water to you or flashed from a nearby object to you?** I believe I was hit right on the top of my head.
- **At what point in time were you aware that you had been hit by lightning?** When I asked the guy who had called 911 what had happened to me. (*A guide in another nearby boat witnessed the strike and called 911 using a cell phone he had with him. A Flight-for-Life helicopter was on scene within ten minutes and airlifted the guide and one client to Idaho Falls*)
- **Based on the physical evidence where did the lightning hit your body?** My ball cap and rain jacket hood had a large hole blown in them and there were arc marks on the top my head.
- **Based on the physical evidence where did the lightning exit your body?** Through my arms down through the oars (*aluminum*) to the water.
- **What injuries did you incur?** Minor burns of the arms, shoulder and neck. Blown eardrums and inner ear injuries. (*The guide also told me that he had a small "exit" wound on one foot.*)
- **What injuries did the others that were with you incur?** The woman in the back of the boat lost consciousness. (*She was evacuated along with the guide by Flight-for-Life helicopter to Idaho Falls and released later the same day. The guide remained in hospital for several days before being released*)
- **What would you do different if faced with a similar weather situation in the future?** Get off the water; take shelter wherever that may be.

Lessons Learned

While this incident involved a guide and his clients, fishermen also place themselves at similar risk if they continue to wade-fish or float as a thunderstorm develops. The storm gave ample warning to the guide to get off the water and under cover — limited that cover was. It would have been safer for the group to be off the water where they were the "tallest objects around" and therefore the most likely to be hit.

(Peter K's Survival Tips continued on Page 7)

(Peter K's Survival Tips continued from Page 6)

It was fortunate that another guide with a cell phone was nearby and able to call for medical assistance. In this instance the guide and the client regained consciousness spontaneously and neither were seriously injured. It could have been quite a different story had the victims experienced the cardiac and pulmonary difficulties commonly associated with lightning strike! Who would have been there to provide CPR? With two unconscious victims in the boat the survivor would have had to choose to whom he provided CPR – if he could have!

There is very little that can be done if caught in a storm to ensure ones safety. Moving from an area of greater risk to one of lesser risk is often all that can be done if those involved have waited too long. It is possible to roughly determine the direction a storm cell is moving by counting, in seconds, the time interval between the flash of the lightning and the crash of the thunder. Five seconds equals one mile. If the count is 30 seconds or less you are in danger – find a safer area! A personal lightning detector, is also now available that can warn you when lightning strikes in your vicinity (*Strike Alert*, available from Outdoor Technologies 719-536-9990).

If possible, those at risk should shelter in a vehicle or a substantial building. All metal should be removed from the body so as to remove the likelihood of being burned. If sheltering in trees, stand away from the trees that extend above the canopy. Stand away from the trunks of the trees. Spread out at least 60 feet – don't stand close together. If physically possible, crouch down with your feet together, hands over your ears and hold that position until the storm moves out of the area. If, because of body shape or age, you can't assume that body position, stand feet together, hands over your ears and head bowed. Stay under cover for at least thirty minutes after the last lightning strike in your vicinity before continuing your activities.

It is much better not to be caught out in a thunderstorm than it is to rely on questionable procedures to ensure your safety as the lightning strikes around you.

BE PROACTIVE NOT REACTIVE!

“If you see it -- flee it. If you can hear it -- clear it!”

Contest Deadline EXTENDED!!!

The 2024 RMOWP photo and writing contest deadline has been extended until **Monday, July 22, 2024**. Rules, categories, and entry forms can be found at rmowp.org.

Our annual contest highlights the best photos, videos, writings, and art produced by our many members. Not a member? You can join when you submit your contest entries! For membership requirements, please visit rmowp.org.

Next National Park Free Day Set for August 4, 2024



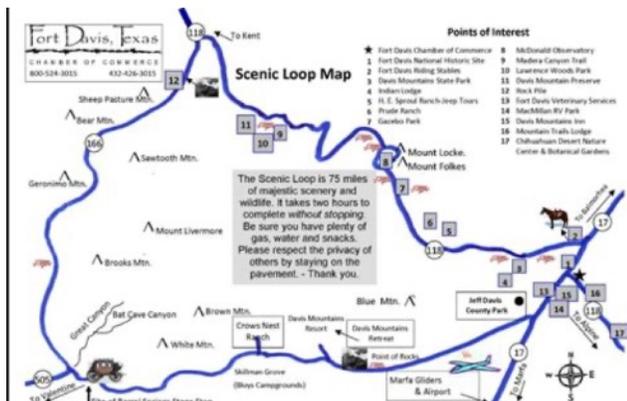
The next Free National Park Day will be August 4, 2024, in honor of the anniversary of the Great American Outdoors Act. The [Great American Outdoors Act](#) (GAOA), passed in 2020, provides funding to improve infrastructure and expand recreation opportunities in national parks and other public lands. The legislation established the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund and guaranteed permanent funding for the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund. *(Information and photo courtesy NPS.)*



Great Horned Owlets by Buddy Green, Honorable Mention 2023

Set Your Sites on Fort Davis!

by David Staat



Davis Mountain Loop map, Courtesy of Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce

One of the Gems of the Davis Mountain area is a 75.5 mile driving loop through the Davis Mountains. The drive can be completed in two hours, or it can be an all day adventure, depending on how many stops you make and how much time you wish to explore the various sites along the way. No matter where you start or which direction you drive, there are plenty of great vistas and interesting things to explore, plus abundant wildlife.

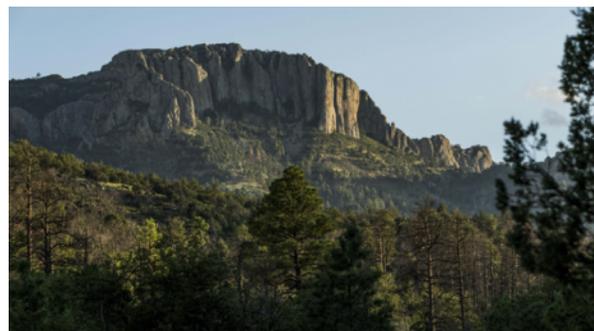
Driving west on Highway 118, the first stop is the Davis Mountain State Park built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. It is 2,600 acres of camping, hiking, bird watching, and scenic views. Details of the park can be found on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/davis-mountains>.

From the state park, driving west you pass several historic ranches, one being the Prude which was established in 1897 and has grown from a working cattle ranch to a guest ranch, summer camp for children, and family vacation spot. (See <https://www.prude-ranch.com/heritage>)

Leaving the ranch, Highway 118 turns northwest and proceeds up the mountain to the McDonald Observatory. Here is an opportunity to join a star party, tour the giant Otto Struve Telescope, or just enjoy some solar viewing. Check the website for current timing of these events at <https://mcdonaldobservatory.org/>.

Continuing on Highway 118, about ten miles from the observatory, is the beautiful Madera Canyon, surrounded by 33,000 acres of wilderness area protected by the Nature Conservancy Davis Mountains Preserve. Along this stretch of road, you will find the Laurence E. Wood picnic area, a great place for lunch. There is also a loop trail nearby. The trail is a moderate 1.6 miles long and passes through woodlands and meadows. If you take the entire loop, you climb 177 feet in altitude, which is very doable for a hiker of any skill level. (For details <https://www.trailforks.com/trails/madera-canyon-loop-trail/>)

Continuing north on Highway 118, about four miles from the trailhead, you turn southwest on to Highway 166, heading back towards Fort Davis. The road continues through mountain passes, turning into grasslands and the Chihuahua Desert, past Bear Mountain and the west side of Mount Livermore, the tallest mountain in the Davis Mountain chain.



Mount Livermore, photo courtesy of Davis Mountain Conservancy

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Near Point of Rocks there is a picnic area which affords another opportunity for lunch, or you can continue farther east to the Chateau Wright Winery where you can sample the wine and have a meal from a well-appointed food trailer there. The food and wine are very good. (See <https://chateauwright.com/>)

From the winery, it is another 10 miles back to Fort Davis.