

Keeping fit during winter challenging

A few days before Christmas while enjoying a cup of coffee at The Coffee Trader, I bumped into a longtime cycling buddy, Dr. John Lambert. We caught up on the latest personal news including the challenges of staying upright on a bicycle.

John was lamenting the fact that training sessions to prepare for rides like the Iron Horse Classic in Durango made him so tired it impacted his ability to carry on with other daily activities. For me the stamina needed for a 20-mile mountain bike ride of yesterday equates to a 10- or 12-mile ride in recent years. Add to that the challenges of exercising during the cold, wintry months, and the realities of keeping fit really pile up.

It has always been a challenge for me to stay fit during the winter. My main mode of outdoor activity, mountain biking, is significantly curtailed by the cold and snow. I'm admittedly a three-season cyclist by preference, but have learned to adjust my activities during the winter.

Since I don't do much mountain biking during the winter, I have to replace that physical effort with some other activity. Cross-country skiing fits the bill when it comes to a good cardio-pulmonary workout to replace mountain biking. Places like the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park or the upper reaches of Dave Wood Road aren't too far from town, and provide access to good snow most winters. The Black Canyon's groomed trail is an added bonus. The groomed trail systems on the Grand Mesa and Ironton Park are top-notch if you want to travel further afield.



Bill Harris

Outdoors



COURTESY PHOTO

Dominguez Canyon is a great place to hike during the winter.

I do a lot more hiking during the winter. Local bike paths are very convenient, but natural surface trails aren't off limits. Seeking out trails with little or no snow isn't too hard to do most winters. The trails around Delta and along the lower Gunnison River stay snow free during most winters. The Confluence Park trails and the Escalante Wildlife Area's Hamilton Tract are favorites.

On Christmas Eve my grandson, Marcus and I hiked Dominguez Canyon. It was cold, and a bit breezy, but the sun was out. We covered 7 miles in relative comfort. The trail leading into Dominguez Canyon can be busy - it's close to Grand Junction and very popular. I was hoping that doing the hike on the day before a major holiday, combined with the cold, we would have the trail to ourselves. The

trailhead parking lot was empty when we arrived. Unfortunately we didn't see any desert bighorn sheep.

A few days before the Dominguez hike my other grandson, Gabe, joined me for a full day of birding during the Montrose Christmas Bird Count. We made a point to get out of my truck a few times to locate birds. Birding is a good excuse to get outdoors. Proper clothing is a winter

outing necessity. Dressing in layers allows you to adjust to variable weather conditions. Wool or fleece garments work well in the cold. A windproof outer layer and head and hands protection can help keep you warm. There is some truth to the adage "If your hands get cold, put on a cap".

The recent "Tips from the Posse" by Mark Rackay in the Outdoors section of the Press had some great advice about being prepared while traveling in the outdoors. No one plans to get stuck in the outdoors. Carrying a cell phone can provide a false sense of security since cell reception is non-existent in much of the backcountry. Being a survivor is preferable to being a statistic.

This winter I started going to Anytime Fitness with my wife to keep in shape. Kathy has been going there several times a week since last summer. She had been going to Curves regularly for years, but the local franchise closed its doors. Kathy and I attended a fitness class many years ago when we were both employed by Montrose Memorial Hospital, but we haven't worked there for years.

I'm pretty much a neophyte when it comes to gym workouts. TJ at Anytime Fitness was very helpful orienting me to the various machines he has. A large variety of weight trainers, free weights and cardio-pulmonary units such as spin bikes, treadmills and elliptical machines are available to use. During my recent conversation with Dr. Lambert he mentioned that he likes the spin classes at Gold's Gym. I like to mix up my workout with weight training and the cardio-pulmonary units.

Anytime Fitness is a busy place. During our workouts people come and go. We've seen Ed and Judy Cort, and John and Paula Straw along with other familiar faces. Everyone seems to have the same goal in mind - keeping fit. Not a bad New Year's resolution.

Bill Harris is the author of "Bicycling the Uncompahgre Plateau". He has traveled the backcountry of the Colorado Plateau since 1976.

Let's stay warm out there

One of the most difficult things to do when outdoors in the winter is to stay warm - especially staying warm in a practical way.

When I was just a wee lad, my grandmother would dress me to go outside and play. Back then you started with cotton long underwear followed by flannel shirts and corduroy cotton pants. Add a wool sweater and stuff yourself in a thick snowsuit. Finish the ensemble with a cotton facemask, beanie and mittens, and then out the door you went.

First problem was that you looked like a tick on a hound dog about ready to explode. You would play for a while and get sweated up, then you started freezing to death. How could anyone get cold with all that on? Well, let's examine that a little bit.

Keeping warm in the outdoors requires some thought and planning, together with a basic understanding of how the body reacts to the cold. The body's main purpose in the cold is to keep your core warm. This includes all your central organs; heart, lungs and such. As the temperature of your core drops, the body reduces blood flow to the fingers, toes, hands, feet, arms and legs in order to protect the core. This is why you feel cold in your appendages first. Therefore, proper planning requires you to think about your extremities, as that's where you will feel the cold first. The best secret to staying warm is to stay dry. Having outerwear that is made of a water repellent material such as Gore-Tex is vital, especially if snow starts to fly. However, keeping what's inside dry is probably more important. Nothing robs the body of heat faster than moisture.

Wear a moisture-wicking layer of clothing next to your body. That



Mark Rackay

Tips from
the Posse



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETE KOWALSKI

Dressing properly for the activity you enjoy in the outdoors requires some thought and planning but can be the difference between a good time and a tragedy.

means no cotton at all. I understand that cotton is comfortable and feels so nice and soft. Cotton traps and holds sweat and moisture like a sponge and will make you cold very quickly. Polyester and blends that may include spandex are far better choices. These materials wick away moisture from your skin and dry much faster than cotton.

After that basic layer next to your skin, the key is to dress in further layers. These layers will help create and trap warm air near your body. Many new materials have been invented in recent years that accomplish this without all the bulk of other materials of years past. While things like down and wool are still very effective, active wear is much more practical if you look into materials such as Thinsulate, PrimaLoft, and others.

When you are going to partake in a strenuous activity, such as an aggressive hike, it is a good idea to strip down several layers. You can dress lightly and carry the other layers in or attached to your pack. When you reach your destination or stop the activity, it is very easy to add another layer as you begin to cool down.

A really good idea is to carry an extra set of core clothes in your pack with you. I know that it sounds crazy to strip down to

nothing, but if your base layer is soaking wet, it is the most practical thing to do. Getting those wet clothes away from your skin, replacing them with something dry will make all the difference in the world. Your body temperature will catch up quickly with dry layers on your carcass.

If you are going to be inactive for a while there are several other items that can help. A heavy outer layer, such as a snowmobile type suit, or the bib type heavy snow pants can help. While these are not practical for activity they can be great for being outside doing something that is relatively inactive such as sitting in a hunting blind. Another option is to place a body warmer against your chest. These are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased in most outdoor stores. The body warmer is activated by the air when you open it from its packaging. Be certain not to place it directly on the skin, keeping a layer of cloth between it and you is best.

In future columns we will talk about keeping specific areas warm, such as your hands, head and feet. Until then, see you on the trail and be safe in the outdoors.

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COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

Wildlife commission to meet

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission will meet Jan. 14 and 15 at the CPW Hunter Education Building, 6060 Broadway, Denver. The meeting begins at 8 a.m. Jan. 14 and is scheduled to adjourn at noon Jan. 15.

Commissioners will receive briefings on a variety of issues including updates from the Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture and from CPW's financial, regional, non-motorized trails grants, Riverwatch and Golden Gate State Park staff.

Actionable items include updates to regulations including general provisions, big game, wildlife, parks and unregulated wildlife, selection for Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation Board, Staunton Natural Area designation and others.

This meeting also continues a strategic planning discussion and process the morning of Jan. 16.

A complete agenda can be found at <http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Commission/2015/Jan/AGENDA.pdf>.

Constituents can listen to commission meetings through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website. Find out more at <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Commission.aspx>.

Never too early to plan spring, summer camping

The latest blast of cold and snow may place camping low on the New Year's priority list, however, Colorado Parks and Wildlife suggests now is the best time to plan a spring or summer getaway at Colorado State Parks.

Plan a getaway this spring or summer at any of the more than 3,900 campsites and 50 cabins and yurts located throughout the state at elevations ranging from approximately 3,800 to 9,400. Check out all the options at <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Pages/ParkMap.aspx>.

Camping fees range from \$10 to \$26, not including the reservation fee and park pass. Every vehicle entering the park, including RVs and towed vehicles, must have a parks pass for each day. Annual parks passes are \$70, daily parks passes are \$8 to \$9.

Visit the website or ask for detailed information at (303) 297-1192.

Campground amenities at many parks include restrooms, full-electrical hookups and shower facilities. Many parks also offer campsites or cabins for large groups. Almost 300 campsites are ADA accessible. Call (303) 470-1184 or learn more at <http://cpw.state.co.us/buyapply/Pages/Reservations.aspx>.