

Bridal Veil Falls is stunning now

A little over an hour's hot drive to the south of here, the recently melted snow that feeds Bridal Veil Falls feels wonderful as it becomes a cold mist.

Even for those of us who may have set eyes on it several times a year for decades, these recent three weeks of high temperatures are driving an enormous amount of water over the falls. It is moving at such a high speed that it shoots out from the lip of the cliff much farther than usual.

This volume of falling water, at this speed, incongruously looks as if it is falling in slow motion, when viewed from even a short distance away.

It is no wonder, then, that greatly increased traffic is now present on the road leading up to the falls, there on the east end of Telluride. Two U.S. Forest Service Rangers were posted there in uniform during my visit last weekend, which fits with the knowledge that the visitation is higher than ever.

For the many readers who are familiar with the relative solitude of that site in past years, it may be surprising to learn that the Valley View Area Parking (just beyond the vast Pandora Mill historic building) was full of parked vehicles by mid-day. In addition, a long string of vehicles was parked along the edge of the road further down towards the Mill.

About half of the license plates were from out-of-state visitors, even though the only festival in the town that day was a relatively smaller scale wine festival. A sight so impressive to regional residents is even more stunning to the many guests who do not live near such extreme geography as that with which we are blessed here.

These are the tallest free falling waterfalls in our state of Colorado, a state of many hundreds of waterfalls. Not only the sight, but the sound of the falls currently was much different than I have ever experienced.

An absolute roar occurs at the base of the falls,



Outdoors

By John T. Unger

and is so loud that a full-voiced shout would be almost inaudible to someone thirty feet away. In fact, so much water is pounding down that one cannot get anywhere near the ridge of rock that is the usual perch for adventurous locals in late June during most years.

It is no wonder that the 1.8 mile, one-way trip to the base of the falls is enough for most visitors. I noticed that four-wheel drive vehicles with high clearance were frequently driving to the base, but usually staying there only a minute or two. Why is that, I pondered, after people have made a slow, dusty, drive up all of the switchbacks to get there?

It is definitely cool, bordering on cold, there. The walls of mist will soak anyone who stays much longer, but the primal force of the site at this time may also play a part in prompting visits to be cut so short.

For those who drive on up to the top of the falls, vehicle traffic ends there. The ore car tracks and the mine tailings piles of the Meldrum Tunnel are near one of the last switchbacks, and from there the classic views of that valley open up below and out to the west.

Up there, mountain bikers, hikers, and trail runners pass through and continue uphill. This effectively thins out the crowd, as the old mining road continues ascending.

The well-acclimatized self-propelled visitor can enjoy the next miles, providing they are accustomed to the unrelentingly steep climb. Much motivation is supplied by the prospects of making it up to Blue Lake, and of enjoying all of the spruce-fir forest along the way.

This time of year, the road is still running with daily snowmelt in many places, so boots and feet may well be expected to get wet before the day is done.

For those who have allowed enough hours and are supplied with proper amounts of food and drinking water (or are packing a water purifier), the beginnings of slopes sporting wildflowers are just above. Hiking briskly uphill, in the thinning air above 10,000 feet elevation, it still can take a trained person several hours to get up to the Bridal Veil Basin itself. Making the return trip back down to the falls



Otherworldly in sight, sound, and feel, last Saturday's high run-off made the base of Bridal Veil Falls more than impressive. (Submitted photo/John T. Unger)

before the full sun is gone can allow that dense wall of cold mist to cool the traveler before their return to the floor of the valley, with a head full of spectacular images.

John T. Unger is a Diplomat of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, with over twenty-five years of practice in Montrose. He is constantly impressed by our region's altering beauty that occurs with each change of season. Ideas for future columns are welcomed at sportsdocunger.com.

Choosing the right knife blade



Here are my 2 favorite all around knives for most outdoor work. Left is a Tanto blade, partially serrated and an automatic while the fixed blade is a drop point. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

In our previous column, we discussed choosing a knife, fixed or folding, which would be useful for all your outdoor situations. Problem is, there is no one "do everything" knife. If a knife were to be perfect for filleting fish, it would never work as a chopping knife in an emergency.

There are many different types of blades available, with new designs coming out all the time. I will describe a few here to help get you on the right track.

Drop Point

The most common blade type is the drop point, which has a convex-shaped, sloping spine and a lowered point. This blade style is most popular with hunters because the large belly is perfect for skinning. The drop point has a very strong tip that is crucial in a survival situation. The protected tip

is not as useful for fine, detail work like a clip point blade.

Clip Point

Probably the second most popular blade is the clip point. The front half appears to be clipped off, hence the name. The removed area can be straight or concave, and the tip created by this design makes the blade capable of very precise, controlled cuts. The clip point's tip is much sharper than the drop point tip. Because of this, the tip is more fragile and subject to breakage.

The clip point is one of the oldest designs around. A popular version of this knife is the Bowie knife, made famous in the movie *Crocodile Dundee*.

Tanto

The Tanto is a modern, Americanized spinoff of the Japanese samurai sword. The blade

resembles a dagger with a gently sloping spine that meets the blade edge at a sharp, angular point. Tanto blades can pierce, stab and slice, making them the favorite of military, law enforcement and first responders. The tanto style is my personal favorite for general outdoor work but they can be a pain in the posterior to sharpen.

Serrated Blades

A serrated blade is the cat's meow when you have to cut through coarse or textured objects like rope, tree branches, or thicker objects that require a back and forth sawing action. Serrated blades have tooth-like serrations that grab and cut through objects with relative ease when compared to straight blades. If you think a tanto is difficult to sharpen, wait until you try to put an edge on a serrated blade. You need a special



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

sharpening rod that fits between the serrations. The good news is that they rarely need sharpening.

Filet Knife

Filet knives are usually made of softer steel so they can be sharpened easily and often. Their job, obviously, is to filet fish and the very fine detail work associated with removing small fish bones. The points are very sharp and thin, as is the entire blade. It is a special purpose knife and I only include it here as an addition to your knife battery. If you need to clean fish, the tanto or others will make a mess of the project. A small, folding filet knife is a great addition to your outdoor pack.

There are many more blade designs available that we did not discuss here. Most are special purpose designs, such as self-defense, sailing and craftwork. These are not applicable to outdoor situations in the general theme of this article, but are worthy of investigation by you if they fill a specific need you may have.

I can't stress enough how important it is to buy a quality knife and avoid the cheap five-dollar bin knives. When the outdoor situation you are in demands a knife, a quality blade will make all the difference. The downside is how you feel when you lose an expensive knife. I have lost so many quality knives over the years that I have started to take group therapy.

If I had to pick one design, it would be an automatic tanto blade with partial serrations on the blade for my folder. My fixed blade would be a

drop point with a 4 to 5 inch blade and a good grip.

Rather than just one knife, you would be better served to have a folder in your pocket, a fixed blade on your belt, and a couple spares in your pack, just in case Murphy is around. Until next time, keep your blade sharp and see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse, call 970-252-4033 (leave a message), or email info@mcspsi.org

New forest fire management officer for the GMUG

SPECIAL TO THE MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests announce the arrival of CorDell Taylor to the GMUG Supervisor's Office as the forest fire management officer.

Taylor will start work during the week of July 23. He replaces Clay Flower, who accepted a position with the Job Corps in Washington D.C. in January.

Taylor is transferring from the Daniel Boone National Forest, where he served as the forest fire management officer for the last three years. CorDell brings leadership skills to the Forest along with vast operations and fuels experience from several different National Forests including the Ashley and Manti-LaSal in Region 4, along with Bureau of Land Management's Price and Battle Mountain Districts. He is also a six-year veteran of the U.S. Army National Guard's 19th Special Forces Support Company (Airborne).

Taylor will be moving to Colorado with his wife, Cassie, and three children, Mercedes (13), Kiersten (11), and Trey (9). They love being active in the outdoors, including hiking and motocross. The family is eager to embark on this new adventure.

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