

Learning from the Amerind Museum

Many of my outdoor adventures have taken me into the depths of southeast Utah's canyons. The rugged, wild landscape and scenic beauty are what draw me to canyon country, but the region's ancient inhabitants draw me there as well.

Tucked into the alcoves of hundreds of canyons and on top of countless mesas rest the remains of the Anasazi villages, large and small, remain in mute testament to a hardy people who eked out a living on much of the Colorado Plateau for well over a thousand years. In the late 13th century for reasons only known to them, they moved on. Today's archaeologists examine the material culture the Anasazi left behind and have devoted study after study to the questions, "Why did they leave?" and "Where did they go?"



Bill Harris

Outdoors



COURTESY PHOTO

Scenic beauty of the Dragoon Mountains.

what we liked, but had very little background in regard to how it is made and evaluating the quality of what we see in the shops.

So, we decided to learn more about contemporary Southwest Indian pottery. In early December we attended the "Pottery Collector's Workshop" sponsored by the Amerind Museum. The museum is located in the small village of Dragoon, Ariz., an hour's drive from Tucson along Interstate 10. Kathy and I discovered the museum early on in our trips to Arizona.

What impressed us the most was the presence of a museum full of wonderful archaeological and historic exhibits, a research library and works of Indian art in the middle of the desert, miles from any semblance of civilization. Sure, there are a few homes and ranches nearby, but the trappings and benefits of the big city are many miles away. What captured my attention

was the wonderful Southwest architecture of the museum's buildings and the great scenery.

William S. Fulton purchased the 1,800-acre ranch that hosts the museum in 1930. In 1937, Fulton founded the Amerind Foundation as a private non-profit research institution supporting his archaeological research. According to the museum's website "Fulton believed that one of the few ways of interpreting ancient cultures was through the collection and preservation of their surviving material remains. He also believed that contemporary Indian culture could help interpret the past, but that many native traditions were rapidly disappearing under the influence of the modern world."

The Amerind's mission to carry on Fulton's vision is alive and well today. The museum is open daily for public viewing. Many of the

exhibits connect the past with the present. Almost on a monthly basis the Amerind sponsors a workshop about Native American crafts, holds a demonstration of Native American crafts or conducts a tour in the region.

The pottery workshop was informative and well-organized. Charles King, a Colorado native, and owner of the King Galleries in Scottsdale, Ariz. was our instructor. He was supported by the Amerind's chief curator, Eric Kaldahl and associate curator Ron Bridgemon. We were allowed to view and carefully handle some of the museum's pottery collection. Charles' knowledge of contemporary Pueblo pottery is superb. He has a long-standing friendship with many of the Indian artisans whose works he sells at his galleries.

The most unique aspect of the workshop was that we were guests at the Fulton House for the entire week-

end workshop. The Spanish Colonial style home has been maintained in the décor of the first half of the 20th century. A large courtyard graced with two fountains and a large fireplace is surrounded on three sides by living quarters. The main room provided a commanding view of the Dragoon Mountains. As guests, we were allowed to hike on the museum's trails. The high desert landscape surrounding the Dragoon Mountains is just beautiful.

For many years we have been members of the Amerind Museum. Attending one of its tours or workshops has been a goal of ours. This year we decided to give ourselves an early Christmas present by participating in the pottery workshop, and it was worth the money and then some. We'll be back.

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

It's what is inside that counts – your vehicle that is

It was late February when the senior couple had purchased a new automobile. The car was one of those all-wheel drive sport vehicles that are popular here in the mountains. The couple decided to take the vehicle up Highway 90 and see just how well it did in the snow. They did not have any extra clothes or even the proper footwear. The assumption was made that since we are in a nice warm car, heavier clothes, food and footwear were not needed. Unfortunately, they were wrong.

They encountered a snowdrift across the road and assumed the car could just plow on through. Seconds later, they were hopelessly stuck and it was after 10 p.m.

Temperatures outside were in the single digits. Fortunately for them, they had cell service, albeit a weak signal. A call to 911 dispatched the posse in their direction. By 1 a.m. they were safe and sound, in a warm vehicle heading back to town. But what if they did not have cell service? The outcome surely would not have been the same.

Enough is said about getting your vehicle ready for winter, such as antifreeze, batteries, washer fluid, skid chains, adequate tires and the like that we will not go into that here. This is more for the folks who take the road less travelled and might find them self stranded. Your vehicle could be-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETE KOWALSKI

Here members of the sheriff's posse assist a stranded motorist. These people slid off the road and spent a very cold night in their truck.



Mark Rackay

Tips from the Posse

come stuck in a drift, a mechanical breakdown or forced to stop because of a whiteout in a snowstorm. What makes the difference between an inconvenience and a tragedy is some advance preparation.

Be certain that you have heavy clothing and footwear that you can wear outside in the event you are stranded. While you may choose to stay in your vehicle, the temperature inside will drop very

quickly. Steel and glass don't provide much insulation. You cannot just run the vehicle the whole time because of fuel concerns as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Having these heavy clothes and perhaps a few wool blankets can make a difference. As for footwear, good winter boots with heavy insulation are important. Pac boots work well for this. You don't have to wear them while

you drive but have them in your emergency kit. You will appreciate them if you venture out of the car to shovel snow and such.

You can purchase hand, foot and body warmers in just about any place that sells sporting goods. These are inexpensive and lightweight. Once opened to the air (which activates them) they can provide several hours of heat. Having a selection of them on hand can make a big difference in keeping your body temperature up.

Running the engine for about five to 10 minutes each hour is a usual practice as long as you are certain that the exhaust is not entering the inside compartment and the tailpipe is clear. Another alternative is a survival candle. These candles take up very little space, can burn for many hours and give off a surprising amount of heat in an enclosed area.

Carry a shovel in the trunk. Piling snow on top of the roof and trunk of the

car provides a nice layer of insulation and will help keep it cozy inside. It is a good idea to keep the hood clear of snow so searchers can spot the color contrast from the air. Tying some colored cloth to the antennae also helps. While inside the car, exercise every so often to keep your circulation going. This will also help keep you from falling asleep, which can be deadly if it is cold enough.

Keeping a survival kit should go without saying. Having a stock of nonperishable foods and plenty of water to drink will make the stay more tolerable. The food will help replace some of those calories you burn trying to stay warm. A small first aid kit is something you should have year-round. A flashlight with extra batteries could be very useful. It is a good idea to use the lithium batteries in the winter. They are more expensive, but normal alkaline batteries leak and fail at extremely cold temperatures while lithium performs much better and last longer. Most of the items above can be kept in a storage tub or a duffel bag taking up very little space.

If you spend a little time thinking about the possibility of being stranded and how you will react, it could save your life. There are probably other items you may want to include for the type of traveling you do. Remember, in an emergency situation, your mind cannot go where your body has not been. See you on the trail.

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

Bird count set for Saturday

The early watcher gets the bird! The Bureau of Land Management and the Audubon Society is conducting an annual bird count of populations in Montrose County on Saturday.

The count takes place within count circles, which focus on specific geographical areas and each circle is overseen by a count compiler. Count circles will be divided and areas assigned to participants at the meeting sites listed below. Beginning bird watchers will join a group that includes at least one experienced person.

For the Montrose count, meet at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the Montrose Public Lands Center, 2465 South Townsend Ave. The count continues until the count circle is complete, or until dark; all data must be turned into the count leader by end of day. There will be a meeting after the count at Two Rascals Brewing Company, 147 N. First St.

If your home is within the boundaries of a count circle, you can stay home and report the birds that visit your feeder.

Info: Missy Siders, 240-5332. Christmas bird counting volunteers should bring warm clothes, snacks and/or lunch, drinks, binoculars, spotting scope and bird books. Maps of the birding areas and checklists of birds will be provided.

For more information about Christmas bird counting participation, visit Audubon's website at www.christmasbirdcount.org. For additional information on local efforts, call the numbers listed above or contact Jon Horn, Black Canyon Audubon (970) 249-6761, ext. 14.

A Hotchkiss bird count is slated for Saturday, Jan. 3, 2015. Meet in the City Market parking lot near the junction of Colorado Highways 92 and 133 in Hotchkiss at 8 a.m. Contact: Jason Beason, (970) 310-5117, jason.beason@rmbo.org.