

Wading across, come runoff or high water

When I was a kid, I could not wait for this time of year.

It was now that winter was finally releasing its icy grip on the mountains and spring was here. It also meant that I could head to the hills and do some trout fishing on my favorite streams. Problem was the runoff.

Runoff time is when the snowmelt from the high country starts to swell up the normally low-flowing rivers and streams.

Sometimes referred to as

the mud season, it is def-

nitely a time that special considerations should be taken when around the stream. Rivers that were running low and clear several months ago could now be near or over flood stage. The waters can be a chocolate mud color instead of the usual clear and clean. That coupled with the faster currents and the high volume creates safety hazards. Here we will discuss a few tips for crossing and wading streams.

Wading streams any-

time can be dangerous and these tips can be useful year-round. It is best to stay out of them when they are swollen in the spring. The dirty

water makes it impossi-

ble to see the bottom and you never want to step into an area where you cannot see. You might be stepping off into a hole. Those of us with a little more gray matter in our hair tend to stay out of streams altogether but that is another story.

If the water is clear enough that you can cross, remember to not lift your foot until the other one is firmly planted on the bottom. Try to shuffle rather than lifting your feet.

Crossing at the head of a pool or the tail of a riffle will usually be where the water is the most shallow and easiest to cross.

Angle slightly upstream when you cross the stream. That way, if you have to turn back, you can simply retrace your steps. If you walk downstream, it would be much harder to retrace your steps, as you would then be working upstream and against the current.

Tie a wading belt around your middle when wearing waders. This will trap air in them, which will

give you some buoyancy in the event you fall

in. Without the belt, your waders will im-

mediately fill with wa-

ter and drag the rest of

your carcass under with

them.

Anytime you ven-

ture into the water, a wading staff is a great idea. If you don't have one, a stout stick cut to size from shore will

do the trick. As you

shuffle along, keep the

staff downstream of

you so that you can

lean your weight into

it. Obviously, when

probing ahead with the

staff, if you cannot feel

bottom, better not ven-

ture forth. It is better to

find that deep hole with

the staff rather than

you body dropping off into it.

In the event that you

do take a fall into the

current, remember a

few basic self-rescue

skills. First is to keep

you feet pointing down-

stream. That way, you

can push off rocks and

other debris safely and

usually without injury.

Your legs can help cushion

the blow of objects

which is much better

than using your head.

Do not fight the current.

You will not win. Save

your strength. If you

try to swim, head down-

stream slightly and

cross current. Never try

to work upstream, rather

let the current help

you. And above all, don't panic. You will quickly come to some slower pool or shallow spot where you can make your way to safety.

Your main concern upon emergence is hy-

pothemia. That stream water was probably

snow the day before so

it is still temping some-

where in the 30s. Your

body will succumb to

that kind of cold in a

matter of minutes so

getting dry and warm

requires immediate

attention.

Shallow water can be

even more dangerous

than deep. A fall into the

deep will get you wet

but a fall in the shallows

could land you on rocks and other debris in the water. Wearing felt soled shoes or boots with cleats can provide traction but moving carefully is still advised.

Don't let the run-

off spoil your outdoor

fun. Spring has finally

sprung. Let's enjoy the

outdoors and keep some

safety in mind. Until

next time, see you on

the trail.

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Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



It's runoff time, when the snowmelt from the high country starts to swell up the normally low-flowing rivers and streams. But wading streams anytime can be dangerous. The Montrose County Sheriff's Posse, above, practices swift-water rescue techniques. (Courtesy photo).

Lead poisoning suspected in eagle death

STAFF REPORT

Despite area volunteers' and rescuers' best efforts, a sickened golden eagle died and the suspected culprit is lead poisoning.

A Crawford-area resident brought the young, female eagle into Morningstar Veterinary Clinic on April 20, according to Brenda Miller of Roubideau Rim Wildlife Rescue Center in Olathe.

The bird was emaciated and "very sick from ingesting lead," Miller reported in an email sent to the Daily Press.

Lead poisoning can occur when lead bullets are used to kill game and a hunter doesn't track down the animal he or she shot. Raptors and other wildlife then eat the carcasses, taking the lead on board and as a result are poisoned to one degree or the other, Miller explained.

Miller previously pushed the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to ban the use of lead bullets in hunting, but was not

successful. She said her nonprofit has taken in several raptors suffering from suspected lead poisoning. While the facility would like to be able to test all the birds, it lacks the necessary funds.

The eagle was taken on April 21 to the Birds of Prey Foundation in Denver for long-term care.

The hope was that she could put on weight, survive the medication and escape permanent damage; however, Miller recently learned that the eagle did not survive the night.

Pending test results will confirm whether the bird died of lead poisoning.

Miller in her email thanked licensed raptor rehabilitator Geoff Morton of Crawford for conducting the initial exam and Cort Galbreath for transporting the eagle to Morningstar, where veterinarian Bettye Hooley, vet tech Cris Nichols and the staff pitched in to help.

A CPW volunteer identified as JW took the eagle from the vet



Vet tech Cris Nichols holds a golden eagle on April 20. (Photo courtesy of JW, Colorado Parks & Wildlife Volunteer).

to Hotchkiss, where Linda Hansen accepted the task of taking it on to the Birds Of Prey Foundation, which Miller also thanked.

Roubideau Rim Wildlife Rescue continues to search for land on which to build a rehab facility and education center. The Black Canyon Land Trust is willing

to write a conservation easement for a wildlife rehab center, Miller said. For more information, email rrwildliferehab@gmail.com.

If you find an injured or sick wild animal, or a wild animal you think is orphaned, leave it alone and contact the rescue at 209-5946 or CPW at 252-6000.

As their population grows, moose need more elbow room

Colorado Parks and Wildlife reminds the public to give wildlife plenty of room, especially when it comes to moose.

The moose population is thriving in Colorado and as the number of moose rise, so does the chance for human interaction with them.

Moose are not typically aggressive but they do not fear humans and will defend their young and their territory.

Dogs can provoke attacks because of their resemblance to wolves, a moose's only natural predator. People hiking in moose country need to keep their dogs on a leash. A charging moose will likely follow a dog running back to its owners and can end up injuring them as well.

Moose can grow up to 1,200 pounds and can run up to 35 miles per hour.

When humans are injured by wildlife, it

can result in the euthanasia of the animal, regardless of the circumstances.

Tips for moose encounters:

- Give them plenty of room — enjoy viewing wildlife from a distance!

- If an animal reacts to your presence, you're too close.

- Keep pets away. Never let your dog approach a moose.

- Look for signs that the moose is agitated: raised hackles, lowered head, ears pinned back, swaying back and forth, licking its snout.

- If you see any of those signs, leave the area as quickly as possible and avoid cornering the animal.

- If a moose charges, run away and try to put a tree, vehicle or other large object between you and the moose.

- If you are knocked down, get up and try to get away. Do not stay on the ground.

Wildlife commission to meet in Grand Junction

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission will meet May 5 and 6 at Clarion Inn, 755 Horizon Drive, Grand Junction.

The meeting begins at 1 p.m. May 5 and is scheduled to adjourn shortly after 2 p.m. May 6.

Commissioners will receive briefings on a variety of issues including updates from Great Outdoors Colorado, the Departments of both Natural Resources and Agriculture, Cameo Shooting Facility, Dam Safety Study, Off-Highway Vehicle law enforcement and field presence.

Updates about Colorado Parks and

Wildlife strategic planning, finances and legislative issues are also scheduled along with presentations from Highline, Vega and Sylvan Lake State Parks.

Action items include updates to Big Game regulation chapter (W-2) and 2016 OHV Trail Grant funding approvals.

A complete agenda can be found at: <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/CommissionMeeting2015-5.aspx>.

Anyone 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>.

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