

Top ten fishing spot list for locals

Temperatures near 90. School is out. RVs are commonly seen about town. Air conditioners are running. Yes, summer is here.

Only a few weeks away on June 20 will be the summer solstice. Around the corner is Independence Day. Hopefully you have getaway plans that entail something more than mowing the lawn and washing the car!

To help with those getaway plans is my top 10 local fishing list. Top ten lists are a favorite of late-night talk



Outdoors

By Joel Evans

shows, radio stations and magazines. Wouldn't you agree that a fishing list is more practical? Certainly it will be 10 times the fun. Gosh, you might even post it

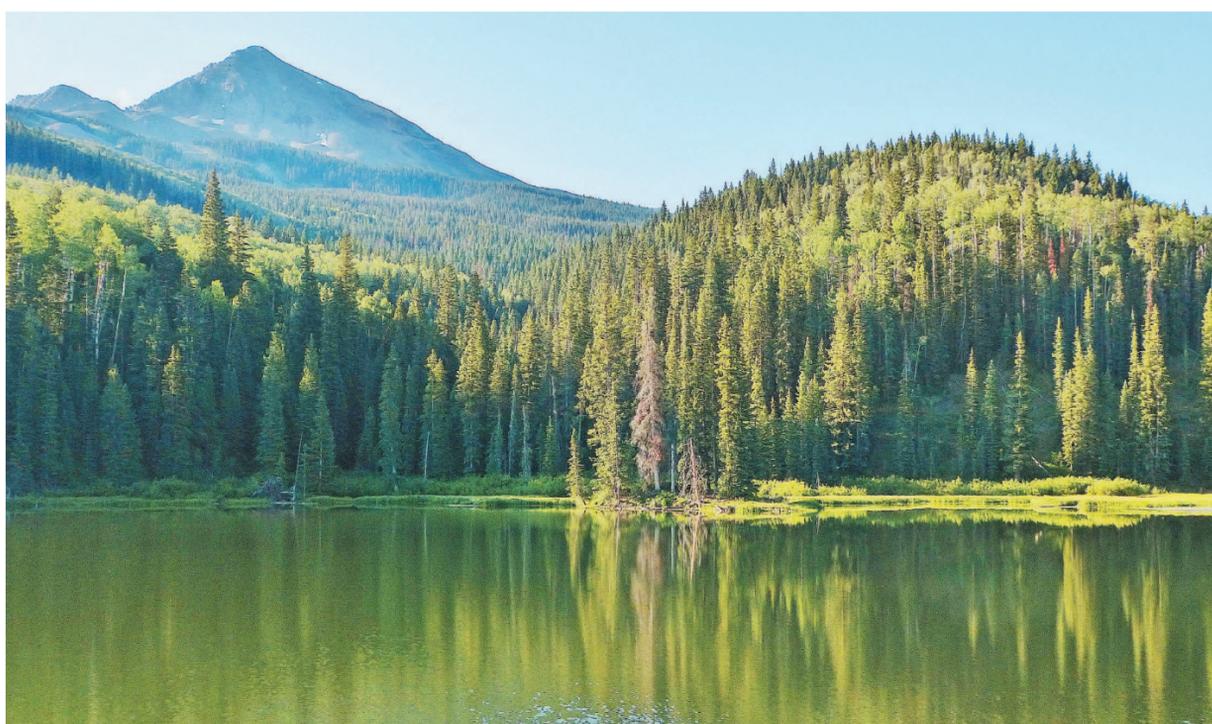
on your refrigerator. No particular order – just great places to be.

1. Ridgway State Park - A place that has it all. Ridgway Reservoir and the Uncompahgre River. Camping with a view. Swimming, biking, and boating. Modern facilities. A short drive from home, yet the complete essence of getting away from it all.

2. Cimarron Valley - A recreation paradise only an hour from town. Small, intimate reservoirs and ponds such as Beaver Lake and Clear Lake. Camping among the cool aspens in the Uncompahgre National Forest. Silver Jack Reservoir. The Cimarron River with its multiple forks. Hiking and ATV and horseback trails. Beaver ponds along the ridges. Stars at night.

3. Currecanti Recreation Area and Blue Mesa Reservoir - Big water for big fish from big boats. Or just bring a lawn chair to fish from the bank between naps. Walk down Pine Creek Trail and toss a spinner in the Gunnison River tailwater below the Blue Mesa dam. Wade the Gunnison River in the braided currents of the headwaters above the Lake City bridge.

4. Woods Lake - Before Telluride, turn on the Fall Creek road for a peaceful excursion. Take the camper or take the cooler, but definitely take the rod.



Fish Woods Lake by shore or boat. (Courtesy photo)

A fly and bubble combination will get you the distance needed to work the banks past the weed beds. Or use a small boat but be mindful of afternoon thunderstorms. Recently restored and now home to cutthroats.

5. Gunnison River - Choose the easy way with an exhilarating steep drive to the canyon bottom via the East Portal Road. Or choose the hard way with a vertical walk via one of the trails from the rim to the rocky river below. Either way you need good brakes. But either way you'll experience the best in fly fishing for large trout. Trails in the Black Canyon National Park are steep and arduous, requiring a permit beforehand. Further downstream, experience the Gunnison Gorge by exploring one of the several trails off Peach Valley Road. To fully taste the river, book a commercial float.

6. Clear Lake - Near Silverton up the South Mineral Creek drainage. Combine four-wheeling with timberline views of the massive San Juan

Mountains and you have a fishing destination worthy of bragging about. Numerous brook trout of better than average size are a jeweled reward for some extra trouble to get there. Expect a great day, but then again, this is a high-country lake, so don't be surprised if the fish just laugh at you.

7. San Miguel River - Traced by the highway from Telluride to Norwood Hill, access on public land is plentiful along the way. Pick a pullover, assemble your rod of choice, and spend all day sneaking up on small pools between crystal riffles. Think small - light spinning rods with small diameter lines or short fly rods for close quarters casting.

8. Chipeta Lake - Not exactly a major destination, but why not think in your own backyard? Not everything has to be far away nor does it have to be planned. Only have a few hours to fish? Company in town? Kids need a break? Only a hop and skip past the grocery store. Skip rocks or catch a crawdad.

9. Currecanti Creek - Cross Blue Mesa Dam and follow the canyon rim road back west for about five miles until it crosses over Currecanti Creek. Take the dirt road north. Take a picnic. Take the kids. Easy small stream fishing and a great place to teach someone, young or old, how to fish. Nothing big except the fun!

10. Buckhorn Lake - A park with altitude yet close to town, actually a Montrose city park. Access is south of Montrose via Buckhorn Road at Colona. Two separate lakes provide a shaded respite while you kick back and contemplate nothing of importance.

Not an all-inclusive list. But then if I made it that easy for you, you'd quit reading my column. When I see you around town, let me know how you do. Maybe we'll privately share number 11 with each other.

Joel Evans is an avid fisherman, and outdoor writer and photographer, having explored western Colorado for decades.

Beware, bears in the backcountry

With spring finally arriving here in Western Colorado, I thought it would be a good time to write something about the Colorado Black Bear.

If ever there were an animal to get a bad rap, it would be the bear. Seems most people are terribly afraid of them and many are certain that any one they see is bound to attack them.

A study from Colorado Parks and Wildlife shows that from 1960 through 2011 there was 24 bear attacks in Colorado with 3 resulting in death. Since 2000 there have only been 29 fatalities from bear attacks in North America. Seventeen of them were from black bear and 10 from grizzlies.

This works out to an average of 3 deadly bear encounters annually in North America. To put this in perspective, there are 26 people killed by dog attacks and 90 people from lightning strikes annually. Considering the number of people that take to the woods, a bear attack is a pretty rare occurrence.

All of this does not mean that you should be careless while out in bear country. As man encroaches deeper and deeper into the bear's territory, more encounters are happening. Here are some tips to help keep you and your family safe while outdoors should you experience an encounter:

As with most things outdoor related, prevention is the key. Bears are attracted to foods, beverages, gum, and sunscreen or just about anything with an odor. Their nose is 100 times more sensitive

than a human's and can smell food for up to 5 miles away. Because of this, it is important to keep a clean camp.

A clean camp means storing all food, beverages and just about anything with a scent, in airtight containers. Coolers and boxes of food should never be stored in your tent or anywhere a bear can see, smell or reach. Trash should be double bagged and locked in your trunk or camper, never a tent. It is even a good idea to not sleep in the clothes that you cooked dinner wearing as a bear's nose is that sensitive.

If a bear should enter your camp, try to chase it away by yelling or tossing small stones in the direction of the bear. You can bang pots, blow the car horn or use a whistle. Just be certain that the bear has an escape route out of camp.

While you are out hiking around, keep an eye out for bear tracks, scat and shredded logs. All of these are signs that one is in the area. Your normal talking is usually enough to have bears avoid you. Bears will usually hear or smell your presence and leave the area long before you see them. Keep your dogs leashed at all times while outdoors.

Children should be kept between adults while hiking. Don't let them fall behind or run up ahead of the group. Spend some time teaching the kids what to do if they see a bear.

If you see a bear on the trail, stand still and stay calm. If he is standing on his hind legs, he is just trying to see and

identify you. Talk in a normal tone of voice and be sure that there is an escape route for the bear. If you see cubs, immediately back out of the area, as the mother will be close.

A mother bear with cubs is a very dangerous situation. Never allow yourself to come between the mother and cubs as she will defend them viscusly.

If the bear does not leave, wave your arms slowly overhead and talk calmly. When the bear huffs, pops its jaw or stomps its feet, it wants you to give him space. Step off the trail to the downhill side and slowly back away until the bear is out of site.

If a bear approaches a person could be food conditioned and looking for a handout. Very rarely are they aggressive. Stand your ground, yell and throw rocks in the direction of the bear.

In the very rare event you are attacked by a bear, never play dead. Fight back with the bear with everything you have. People have been known to successfully fend off a bear attack with sticks, poles, and a knife and even bare hands.

If you are fortunate enough to see a bear while outdoors, enjoy and watch from a safe distance. Remember, under no circumstances whatsoever, should you feed or attempt to feed a bear.

If your presence causes the bear to look up or changes it's behavior in any way, you are too close. A bear is a remarkable and beautiful creature. Enjoy them safely while outdoors and until next time, 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@mcspi.org

Wildlife commission meets

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission meets at the Pueblo Convention Center, 320 Central Main Street, Pueblo, Colo., June 9-10. The meeting is slated to begin at 9 a.m. Thursday, and is scheduled to adjourn at noon, Friday. Commissioners will receive briefings on a variety of issues, including: updates from CPW Director Bob Broscheid and the Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

A complete agenda can be found at: <http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Commission/2016/June/Agenda.pdf>.

The commission meets regularly and travels to communities around the state to facilitate public participation in its processes. The next commission meeting is scheduled for July in Meeker.

The CPW will meet in Montrose in August. Anyone can listen to commission meetings through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website. This opportunity keeps constituents informed about the development of regulations and how the commission works with CPW staff to manage the parks, wildlife and outdoor recreation programs administered by the agency. Find out more at <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Commission.aspx>.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



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