



The summer sun, even at dawn and dusk, can be tough on your eyes. Here are some ways to protect them. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

The sun and your eyes

When I was a kid, I had dreams of being a professional big game hunting guide in Africa or some other exotic place. Pointing out dangerous game, distant and well camouflaged, to hunting clients with my superb eyesight. For a while, I considered a career as a big league ball player. With my eagle-like vision, no pitcher could ever get a baseball past my powerful swing.

Those dreams came to a crashing halt somewhere in the fourth grade. The blackboard went completely fuzzy, as did everything else in the world. It was so difficult to see, that I started running into things when I walked. I assumed it was a Communist plot but my parents thought otherwise.

I was carried off to an eye doctor who diagnosed the problem as nearsightedness and fitted me with a pair of glasses. So much for my hunting career. Who wants a dangerous game hunting guide who walks into trees and has the nickname “four eyes?”

Wearing glasses has turned out to be a semi-blessing for me. Many of my activities require eye protection and wearing glasses with a shatterproof lens has solved that problem, because I wear glasses full time.

Our eyes are probably the most important sense we have. Approximately 80 percent of the information our brain processes comes through our eyes. We need to pay special attention to our eyes when we are outdoors.

The light from the sun is composed of a visible spectrum of light that allows us to see shapes, forms and colors. On either side of this visible spectrum are ultraviolet and infrared rays that are invisible to us.

Infrared rays are not a significant threat to our eyes in small quantities. Usually, we feel infrared rays as heat. Because of this, we know instinctively when to protect ourselves from them. Ask anyone who ever suffered from bad sunburn about infrared rays.

The rays that are dangerous to our eyes are the ultraviolet type. We have no way of seeing or feeling them and are unaware of their presence. There are three types of



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

ultraviolet rays: UVA, UVB and UVC.

UVA is also known as the aging ray. Exposure to this ray can lead to premature aging of the eye and cataracts. Of the ultraviolet radiation that reaches the Earth, 95 percent of it is UVA.

UVB is known to cause burns on the cornea near the front of the eye. UVB makes up 5 percent of the ultraviolet radiation that

reaches us.

UVC is another story, because it is lethal to human beings. Fortunately for us, UVC is completely blocked by the ozone layer in our atmosphere and none of it reaches the Earth's surface. Sometimes old Mother Nature really does look out for us.

Ultraviolet radiation is at its peak during the hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is the time of day when the sun is directly above us, especially during the summer months.

The only real protection we have against this bombardment of UV rays is a pair of sunglasses. Polarized sunglasses are the best, especially if your activities are on or near the water or in a snow covered landscape.

Wear your sunglasses outdoors all year round, even on a cloudy day. The sun's UV rays pass through the clouds. In the winter-time it is especially important, as the snow reflects the rays back into your eyes. Being on the water has the same effect of reflecting UV rays back into your eyes, giving them a “double dose.”

When choosing sunglasses, pay attention to whether they block the UV rays rather than how dark they are. One hundred percent UV protection, or UV400 is the best. I use polarized glasses for all my outdoor activities.

If you are a snow boarder or skier, wear goggles that are designed to block the sun's UV rays. For the extreme exposures, such as prolonged activities in snow covered alpine tundra, consider a pair of Glacier Goggles. These were developed for outdoor activities at the Polar Regions.

Contact lens wearers should be aware that most brands of contacts do not provide any UV protection. There are some that have this ability but it is limited to the cornea and

pupil of the eyes. This leaves the sensitive tissues of the conjunctiva and eyelids exposed. Therefore, good sunglasses are still required.

I also believe in wearing a visor type hat. The visor provides a shade for your eyes and prevents a direct shot of sunlight from hitting them. It also keeps my newly formed bald spot on my head from burning, but that is a story for another day.

There are other irritations to your eyes that can come from being outdoors. If you are bike riding, using an ATV or running, dust, insects and pollen can all get into your eyes. Glasses will help protect your eyes from low hanging

branches as you head down the trail.

I always wear a hat and my glasses when outdoors. It has gotten to be one of my “good” habits. I think that the glasses have actually helped my hunting career because I don't bump into near as many trees as I used to. I often wondered if Murphy has to wear glasses.

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Fourth Annual Smallmouth Bass Tourney set for Ridgway State Park, July 7-28

Anglers can vie for \$5,000 in cash prizes and actively participate in an important wildlife management activity at this year's Fourth Annual Smallmouth Bass Tournament at Ridgway State Park, July 7-28. Colorado Parks and Wildlife sponsors the tournament.

No tournament entry fee is required and the more smallmouth bass anglers catch and keep the better their chances of winning prizes. Anyone 16 years and older must have a Colorado fishing license to participate.

The purpose of the annual tournament is to protect native fish and water users downstream of the reservoir. Smallmouth bass, introduced illegally at Ridgway Reservoir more than a decade ago, are predator fish than can survive in Western Slope Rivers, including the Uncompahgre River, which flows from the reservoir. There is a significant risk of smallmouth bass escaping from the reservoir into the river where they could reproduce and consume native fish species found nowhere else in the world. Smallmouth bass have escaped other impoundments in Western Colorado and are adversely affecting populations of native fish in several rivers.

Last year 126 anglers participated in the tournament and removed about 2,400 smallmouth bass. The fish ranged in size

from 3-inches to 17-inches long.

But no matter what size fish anyone catches, there's a chance of winning cash prizes that range from \$250 to \$1,500. There are two prize categories. In the “raffle category” anglers will be given a raffle ticket for every fish they turn in. Tickets will be drawn at the end of the tournament and the first prize is \$1,500. There are also three additional second tier prizes of \$250. The drawing will be held at 6:30 p.m., July 28, at the Ridgway boat ramp.

In the “angling category,” prizes will be awarded for: Most smallmouth caught, \$1,500; second most caught, \$500; third most, \$250; largest smallmouth caught, \$250; and smallest, \$250.

For the kids, any angler 12-years-old or younger who turns in a smallmouth bass will be given a package of fishing lures. Those prizes are limited to one per angler.

In all categories the fish must be turned into CPW officials at the registration table. The tournament starts at 7 a.m. on July 7 and ends at 6 p.m. on July 28.

Boaters are reminded that their craft must be cleaned, drained and dry before entering Ridgway State Park.

For more information about the park and to make camping reservations, go to: cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Ridgway/Pages/default.aspx.

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