

## Go high, stay tall, breathe deeply

The 46th annual running of the Imogene Pass two weeks ago included 30 men and women from Montrose. Along with the other 1,619 who had signed up for it, they all had to train to be running and power hiking non-stop at altitude for several hours.

As with most years for this event, twenty one percent of the registered and paid participants did not show up at the starting line, due to training issues, injuries, or other elements.

While this year's event had a warm temperature at the starting line in Ouray, rain began to fall ten minutes before the starter's gun was fired. Luckily, it quit for most of the rest of the morning. While we cannot control the weather, we can control how we use our bodies to perform our best in the challenging breathing conditions at high altitude.

Imogene Pass is over 13,000 feet elevation above sea level. The mining road on the final mile up to the pass is over 20 percent gradient. When one foot is put in front of another on such a climb in the thin air, a few percent greater efficiency in breathing can make a big difference.

To make the most of your lung capacity in such a setting, hold your head and neck at level or higher. This can enable you to more rapidly move the fresh air in and the old air out.

Our magnificently designed cardiovascular systems work best when the spinal column and ribs create full expansion of the chest during each breath. Especially during such a steep climb, we must correct for the tendency to let our shoulders roll forward. Purposefully roll them back, as would an actor who strides onto a stage.

No matter how slow a runner we might be, we are not turtles. So we must not let the head project forward on the neck. Otherwise, the upper back and neck can develop spasm and chronic pain, much as happens when looking down too long at a phone screen in one's hands.

Some forward trunk lean is appropriate on the uphills, and on a rocky mining road we must visually scan for stable foot placement. The challenge here is to keep our gaze and our carriage ahead but not far forward.

Over the years, many elderly patients have told me that, if they could turn back time, they would stand taller as a young adult, use their full height, and maximize their efforts at good posture. It is easier to develop this habit in our youth, they say, and they are so right.

From the spine outward

Many a runner who completes such an event reports being surprised by how much muscle soreness they experience in their chest muscles and biceps the next day, rather than just in the leg muscles. For our legs to propel



### Outdoors

By John T. Unger



Foot travel on the passes in the San Juan Mountains rewards the hiker or runner with exceptional views like this. (Special to The Montrose Daily Press/John T. Unger)

us forward and upward, the upper limbs must provide equal and opposite force. Each arm swings to counter the torque on the trunk and abdominal muscles.

How about the lower limbs? Whether during the short stride going uphill or the longer stride downhill, we want to minimize the shock being transmitted up through our lower back's discs.

Even the hips and knees are grateful when the shock of each footfall is properly dampened by the arch in the foot. A smooth transfer of ground-impact forces from arch to ankle to calf to thigh muscles occurs when each joint is moving to full range and with proper timing of its firing.

Open the chest muscles

Two simple and effective stretches we can use at home will counteract both the cyclist's tendency to forward rolled shoulders, as well as that of the fatigued runner.

The Skydiver Stretch (also called the Door-frame Stretch), is done by standing in an open door-frame. Rest your forearms on the frame, allow yourself to lean in to it, and just hang there. The chest muscles and also the underside muscles of the shoulder blades will benefit and will thank you for it.

The second stretch has a similar effect. Sit on a large exercise ball, keeping both feet flat on the floor. Walk your feet away from the ball until your upper back is resting on it. Gently glide from side to side while your arms hang away from the body, allowing the chest muscles to ease open.

Of the 581 women and 666 men who finished this year's Imogene Pass Run, many are likely to return again next year, more experienced at knowing what to expect.

Using the above techniques, you may find that your next run or ride feels a bit more coordinated and less tense, even at altitude. As in a fine race car, the systems making up our structural framework are quite interdependent.

Soon it will be time for steep trails in thin air amongst the reds and golds of autumn, before we trade our shoes for skis.

*John T. Unger is a Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, with over twenty-five years of practice in Montrose. He is grateful for the high altitude trails at the headwaters of the Uncompahgre River. Ideas for future columns are welcomed at sportsdocunger.com.*

## Tips for spotting wildlife

One of the main reasons I spend so much time outdoors, and I am sure many of you would agree, is to see and be around wildlife. Whenever I am out in the woods, I am constantly scanning the area for every type of wildlife I can find, to the point I sometimes forget to look where I am walking. I am fortunate to have seen so many species that other people have not had a chance to witness in the wild.

It is not always that easy. Take my friends from Florida for an example. These long time friends come west to take part in an elk hunt every year with me. Over the years I have finally got them set up with the right equipment and clothing so they won't freeze to death while visiting us.

After all the preparations, practice and number of years here, they still can't see game in the woods. A typical conversation will go something like this:

**Me:** There he is, your bull is standing just to the right of that big rock.  
**Him:** Where, I don't see him?  
**Me:** 150 yards, there in the clearing, starting to walk towards the trees.  
**Him:** I still don't see him.  
**Me:** How can you not see him he is standing right there?  
**Him:** I still don't see him.  
**Me:** It's the big brown thing the size of a horse, wait ... never mind, he is in the trees now.

This quaint little scenario has played out dozens of times in my life. In my days guiding flats trips in the Keys looking for bonefish and tarpon, it was a daily occurrence with clients. Flats fish have a mirror like color to them so they reflect the color of the bottom, making them difficult for all but the well-trained eye to see. The fact is, there is an art to spotting wildlife in the woods.

Most people look for the entire



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

animal standing out there in the wide open. Wide open is the way people see animals in magazines and on television. In the wild you will rarely see the entire animal all at once.

Before you get serious about game watching, birding or wildlife photography, make certain you don't have any vision problems. Anyone over 40 knows that vision deteriorates

with age. Having corrective lenses or contacts bringing your vision back to 20/20 is a great place to start.

Start with a visit to your optometrist. While there, make sure the doctor checks you for any type of color blindness. Any limitations you may have for distinguishing colors will be a real handicap to overcome looking to spot game. Especially if you have problems with browns or greens.

The natural light outdoors is far different than the light emitted by the fluorescent lights that are all over our homes and workplaces. Most people spend their life at work with these lights, along with televisions, computer screens, and flat panel televisions. Our eyes have adjusted to these lights, perhaps too much. All that time spent in "unnatural light" has had an influence on the way our eyes collect light and the way our brain processes the information it receives. Fortunately, the cure for this malady is simple; spend more time outdoors.

Whenever you head out to the woods carry binoculars and a camera. If you have a cell phone, it probably has a better camera than most of the pocket sized ones you can buy. Using the binoculars will teach you to look for and pay attention to the small details of the animals you see.

You might start with bird watching, even if it is just around your home. The birds are all delicately colored and oddly shaped. Watching them with binoculars will teach you to pick up on

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Animals have a natural camouflage to match their surroundings as this mule deer buck in full velvet shows. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

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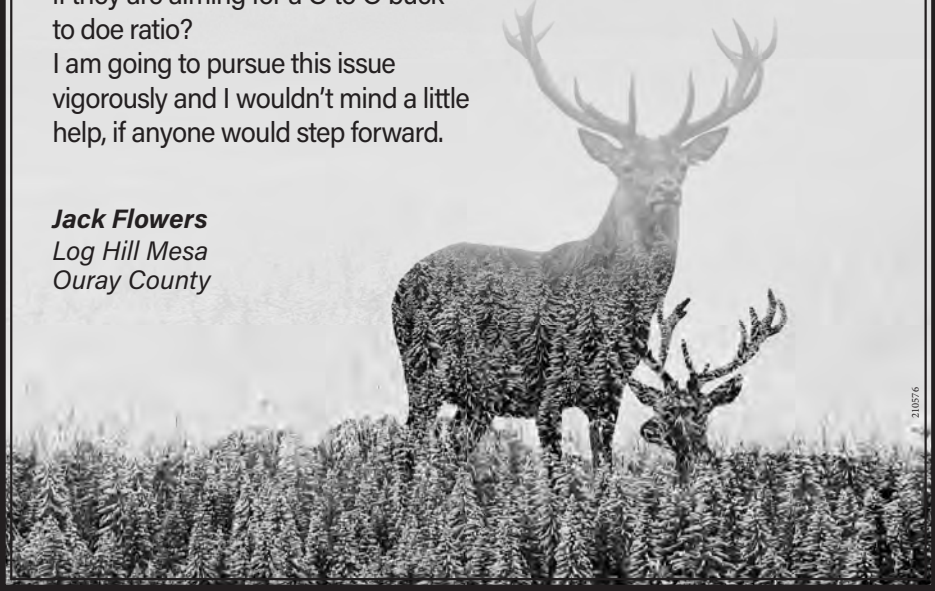
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An Open Letter to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Mismanagement Service:

I recently attended a meeting on Chronic Wasting's Disease (CWD), hosted by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Mismanagement Services, where they told us the deer in the Uncompahgre Valley had recently contracted CWD and possibly had as high as a 7- 10% infection rate. Bad news for the deer and those of us who like to watch or hunt the Mule deer. At the same meeting, they told us the deer herd in this area had withered from 52,000 Mule deer in 1980, to under 15,000 in January 2019. My word! That's a 70% loss or reduction in our deer population! Funny thing was, it really didn't bother the wildlife officials much - as long as the buck to doe ratio stayed "right." Huh? You have lost 70% of your herd and the concern is to keep the buck to doe ratio correct? I personally was appalled! What could have happened to our deer herds? They said loss of habitat, CWD, and a few other diseases I hadn't heard much about was the reason for the decline. I wondered, what about predators - bears, mountain lions, and coyotes? The speaker assured me, no worries, they're not to blame. The funny thing is that the deer demise seems to coincide with us protecting our predators and their escalation in population. What a coincidence! Have you watched the news lately? The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Mismanagement Service has already had to kill over 80 bears this year for getting into trouble. Seems there are too many on the mountain and some have come to town. This has quite frankly gotten completely out of hand. In 1980, when the deer herd was strong, there was intense predator management in this area by the livestock producers, but today their hands have been tied. Bears and mountain lions are now mostly protected and the deer herd numbers have fallen in the toilet. These numbers, according to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Mismanagement Service exactly coincide! They won't tell you that, but their own data shows it. Another interesting fact they shared at this meeting was, in 1980, when there were 52,000 deer, we had very little game damage in the valley by the deer. Wonder why the deer stayed on the mountain back then? There wasn't a bear, a mountain lion, or a coyote behind every bush waiting to eat them for dinner is why the deer stayed on the mountain! If we as hunters, outfitters, and outdoorsmen who want deer in the valley don't get together and pitch a fit, very soon we will have no deer. I wonder if they are aiming for a O to O buck to doe ratio? I am going to pursue this issue vigorously and I wouldn't mind a little help, if anyone would step forward.

Jack Flowers  
Log Hill Mesa  
Ouray County



Animals rarely show their entire body in the wild. How many deer do you see in this picture? (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

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the small details of their bodies, wing and tail feathers and feet. Focus on the slightest of movement the bird makes. When I was learning to shoot clay pigeons on the skeet field, the instructor always said to follow the bird with your eyes, from where it leaves the house until it hits the ground. Don't stare at the entire clay bird, rather, concentrate on the leading edge of it as it moves through the sky. That same concept holds true for spotting wildlife. Once you have learned to spot these birds easily in the wild, you are halfway there. A bird is about the size of an elk's ear. Picking up on the birds in the woods with your naked eye should become easier with a little practice. When you get up into the woods, pick out a place where you can look across an open area with trees or dense woods on the far end. Stare at a single tree and look for something unusual about it, such as a knot, lightning strike or chunk of bark missing. Once you have an idea in your mind of what you are looking at, walk over and see it up close for a comparison. When you start looking for deer, elk, bears or turkey in the wild, start looking for shapes, lines and colors. Animal legs make vertical lines while their back

makes horizontal lines. The horizontal line should stand out in a forest full of vertical lines from trees. A deer's head makes an oval shape, just as does his hind end. Look for colors that stand out or do not fit in. The backside of an elk is a yellowish color. To me, those rumps stand out like a sore thumb. Antlers appear to glisten when the sunlight hits them. You may only see a quick flash as an animal turns his head. It is difficult to see game when you are moving. Aside from looking where you are stepping, it can be difficult to notice movement in the woods around you. Movement is the secret to spotting animals. Most of us use our peripheral vision when we drive. This is where you see movement in your side vision while looking straight ahead. Peripheral vision is used when you notice the car coming up to the stop sign on a road that intersects the one you are on. Train your eyes to use all peripheral vision when you scan the woods for game and don't stare at any one spot. Concentrate on the smallest of movement, such as a head turn flashing an antler, an ear twitch on a doe, or a woodpecker that flies five feet to the next tree. Don't allow yourself to get tunnel vision. Keep your eyes relaxed and look at the big picture in front of you. See the entire forest, not the trees. If you

catch a bit of movement, but aren't sure, look away, and then look back to see if it moved. Sometimes just tilting your head a bit can change the way you see something. Keep in mind that most wildlife does not want to be seen by you. Sometimes an animal will have no idea you are, if you are stealthy enough as you make your approach. The unsuspecting animal is the best to observe but usually they see us long before we see them. My wife is excellent at spotting animals in the wild. She picks up on everything from turkeys to bears. She says her secret is to always be scanning, moving your eyes constantly. It works for her because very little escapes her view. When I have her along, I don't have to look so hard because she will just point it out to me. Besides, I have enough trouble watching where I step. Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and 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 For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@bresnan.net



In the skies once more

Alex Dwight, a provisional wildlife rehabilitator who works through Nature Wildlife Discovery Center in Pueblo, releases a great horned owl back into the Montrose area Saturday, Sept. 14, as another person records it with a cell phone. The owl was found in June here, sick and unable to fly but has been restored to health and was returned to its territory. (Submitted photo)

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