

The tale of the Winter Challenger

Perhaps the snow would change his mind. After all, snow signals a season of change. A season of hibernation and indoor activities. Wouldn't it just be natural to put away the rod and reel during the blowing cold? Why not just wait until the sun of summer once again warmed the Colorado high country and opened the lakes and creeks?

After all, there is so much else to do during a Colorado winter. Most of young Nathan's friends were into playing endless video games after school and snowboarding on weekends. It wasn't that Nathan didn't like the games and boarding. He actually was quite good at both. But given a choice, he would rather be where the fish were biting.

But eager young boys are not easily influenced by inclement weather. The snow only meant he would go fishing less often. The river running through the middle of town was his favorite place to fish. Not so much because it was the best fishing, but rather because it was where he could get to often in the summer on his bike.

With school closed for the winter break and Christmas just around the corner, Nathan thoughts turned to the river. What if that deep hole below the log jam held a trout that had escaped the summer fishermen? Maybe there was a big buck among the deer hanging down in the pocket of willows along the river bottom. Winter brings the bald eagles perched in the tall, barren cottonwoods, looking for a rabbit or fish meal.

Today was his chance. With Christmas only a few days away, everyone was busy with decorating and shopping and running here and there. Probably no one else would be down on the river. He could have the fish and the deer and the eagles all to himself.

Nathan dressed for a Colorado winter day. With high winter spirits, he headed for the river. The sun was out, beginning to melt yesterday's fresh snow. The crisp covering would provide a quiet blanket for him to walk along the riverbanks, peering into the deepest holes along the way, looking for the trout that were half asleep in the cold flows of winter.



Outdoors

By Joel L. Evans

At the river, it was as he had hoped. No tracks in the snow evidenced his first arrival. If it were summer, Nathan would spend the day up and down the river, hitting all the likely holes he knew so well, hoping to land a rainbow or brown out of every one. But today was different. Winter is different.

Today Nathan would be satisfied just to be out in the midday sun. Out away from the busy streets and shoppers. In among the riverbottom home of the quiet fur-

ry and feathered friends he hoped to see along the way. Satisfied to just be on the river, trying for a trout, but not really caring if he caught one or not.

As he made his way through the willow suckers on the way to that hole below the log jam, sure enough, a doe with last spring's fawn in tow sprang in surprise from a pocket of hidden grass. Working his way up the rocky banks, Nathan could see his destination in the distance. A leaning cottonwood marked the place where a log jam had formed during last spring's runoff, piling up and creating a hole where a trout could comfortably hide.

Now sneaking with rod in hand, he carefully approached the best lie. If there was a trout to be fooled lying in the deep, it would be a smart one to have survived the summer pressure. There would likely be only one chance, one cast. It had to be right on, avoiding the snags of the log jam and the overhanging bushes along the banks.

A practice of summer paid off. The cast was perfect and the offering sank quickly to the bottom. Nathan let it drift into the deepest part of the hole, hoping to soon feel a tug on the other end. It came quickly and hard.

The fish stayed down in the hole so Nathan was unsure of its size. But the fight on the other end was serious, seemingly stronger than any he had experienced this past summer. Headed for the underwater snags of the log jam, the fish knew where his escape lay. Nathan knew too, as he pulled on the rod in an attempt to sway the fish back away from the snags. It seemed to be working, for the fish turned and headed straight for him.



They say teach them young. Although not quite ready for prime-time fishing, Davis Abbott thinks he is going with granddad on a winter day to the Uncompahgre River. Not this year, but soon. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Joel Evans)

Nathan thought he was winning as the fish neared enough that he could see its form in the green water. A pink strip on its side was visible and he knew that it would be the biggest rainbow he would land this year. But the big rainbow had other ideas. A second run was strong. The fish turned from his feet, stripping the line out as it charged away, headed for the snags. This time the challenger made it. Nathan could lift the line tight, but there was no movement at the other end. The fish was off and the line was snagged on an underwater log.

Not concerned with the results, Nathan pulled hard to break off. Reeling in, he glanced upwards to a noise above. A bald eagle had landed in the leaning cottonwood, as if to see what the commotion was all about. Nathan looked around. Only the snow and the eagle were witness to his contest with the trout. Satisfied with the day, he turned to follow his own lone tracks back home.

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

How to properly fly with firearms

With the holiday season rapidly approaching, I thought it might be a good time to discuss airline travel and firearms. Many folks will take to the skies to visit family and friends, while others will be attending some of the competitive shooting competitions around the country. Perhaps you may take in a little hunting while visiting the family farm, or deliver a shiny new rifle for a Christmas present (hint to my wife).

With air travel as efficient as it is today, we can get to just about anywhere in the world in a day and a half. That opens the door for worldwide hunting adventures that are limited only by how high you are sitting on your wallet.

About 30 to 35 percent of the hunters that come to Colorado for one of the many big game seasons are nonresidents, and many of them will fly here. If you are one of them, or if you travel out of our state occasionally to hunt, you will probably want to bring your rifle with you. Here are a few things you can

do to make the whole flying with firearms process a little easier.

Despite all the horror stories you read and hear about flying with firearms, the process is really not as bad as you think, as long as you follow the rules. Those rules are so complicated that many of the TSA agents and airline personnel don't understand them either, which does not always

ways make the sojourner all warm and fuzzy.

Before you depart on your trip, print off the TSA's firearms and ammunition policy and the same from the airline that you will be flying. Many times, the employee you are facing does not know his or her own rules. It gets much easier when you head up the food chain and speak to a supervisor. Start out by handing that supervisor a copy of their own rules, printed from their website, and usually the discussion is over. I might point out that often times the rules of the airline and TSA stand in direct contradiction to each other.

Pack your rifle in a really good gun case. The hard sided cases made by Pelican are ideal. The U.S. Government operatives use Pelican cases worldwide. If they hold up to the abuse of the military and government, they can surely stand my little hunting trip.

I remove my rifle's bolt and place it in the case with the rifle. Some airlines require bolt removed while others do not.

Obviously, any ammunition should be removed from the magazine and case. I believe that the ammunition should be packed in original factory boxes or the plastic cases made by Companies like MTM.

Secure the ammunition boxes closed with some packing tape, so they don't open in handling and flight. It is best

See FIREARMS page 12



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

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Christmas plants to brighten the holidays

Have you seen all the great holiday plants that are available this year? It's fantastic! There's so many to choose from. If you have a drab corner of the room that could use a splash of Christmas color or need a gorgeous centerpiece for the table or even a great gift for a friend, you're in luck.

The plant that really caught my eye this year is a "Whoo-Ville" Lemon Cypress (Cupressus macrocarpa "Goldcrest"). This is such a great funny idea for a plant. I wish I had thought of it. Several stores carry lemon cypress, which are a nice plant, but they wrapped these cypress and decorated them to look like a Grinch hat. It's such a clever idea. Just don't plant it outdoors after Christmas. They're not zoned for our climate and won't survive. They can be unwrapped after the holidays and grown as a houseplant. If given bright light and plenty of water they'll produce a refreshing lemon scent when brushed up against, which could happen frequently as they can eventually reach a height of 30 feet tall and 20 feet wide.

Poinsettias are always a holiday favorite and they come in a large variety of sizes and colors that are sure to complement most holiday decor. When buying this plant, choose healthy plants with little pollen showing on the flowers. The trick to keeping them alive is to remember that they don't like to stand



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

in water or become extremely dry. If the pot is wrapped in foil, remove the foil or make a hole in the bottom so water can drain out. Check the soil moisture a couple of times a week and water them only when the soil is dry to the touch. Poinsettias also don't tolerate drafts and should not be placed near doors that are frequently opened or near a heat register. They prefer a bright, sunny location with temperatures around 65 degrees. However, this doesn't mean they like to be placed in a southern window where the intense sun can burn the foliage.

I always love the traditional Poinsettias, but sometimes it's nice to think outside the box, or in this case, the pot. For example, Topiary Rosemarys are as intriguing as they are beautiful, and can make a great tiny Christmas tree. They require a sunny, cool location. One drawback to this plant may be its inability to tolerate dry conditions, or neglect. However, when spring arrives, and the danger of frost has passed, the plant can be placed outside for summer enjoyment. Better yet, you can use it as a fresh herb in any season.

Cyclamen are another interesting plant, with flowers that look as if they have been turned inside out, and they come in a variety of colors. Once again, if you have a cool, sunny location, (around

60 degrees) this plant could be the perfect choice. One note of caution is worth mentioning. When watering this plant, try not to let the water splash onto the crown of the plant. Water it by pouring it into the tray and let the water soak up into the plant. This is a difficult plant to get to bloom again, but it's worth trying.

Azaleas also prefer a sunny, cool location and don't like to become dry. Watering the plant a couple times a month with a solution of one-teaspoon vinegar to one quart of water will help meet the needs of this acid loving plant and keep it blooming for many months.

If you're looking for a plant that's a bit easier to take care of, a Christmas Cactus may be the perfect choice. They prefer a bright sunny location and cool temperatures, but are very forgiving. If the soil becomes too dry, wilting or blossom drop may result. However, with a little additional water, the plant will usually recover and live for many years.

Chrysanthemums and Begonias can also provide wonderful color for the holidays. Mums, however, prefer a brighter location than Begonias. Both of these plants prefer moist soil, so don't neglect them in an unused office over the holidays.

To keep them at their best, fertilize them every couple of weeks while they're blooming. Mums that are sold at this time of year are adapted to greenhouse conditions, and will not survive or flower outside.

Unlike many pines, Norfolk Island Pines will perform



There are so many great holiday plants this year. This "Whoo-Ville" Lemon Cypress is just a sample of some of the great plants available. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Linda Corwine McIntosh)

extremely well under most household conditions, but keep in mind, they are a pine tree and will eventually become a very large houseplant.

When buying any of these or other flowering potted plants, look for a plant with many buds about to open, rather than one in full bloom. And make sure the plant is wrapped well for its trip home from the store as the cold can harm these sensitive plants.

As you can see, you're not limited in your choice of great holiday plants. If you provide the conditions that your plant prefers they will give you color and enjoyment long after the holidays have ended. So why not try something new, and extend your enjoyment of this holiday season!

Linda Corwine McIntosh is an Advanced Master Gardener, ISA Certified Arborist, and Certified Pesticide Applicator.

FIREARMS

FROM PAGE A11

to then pack the ammunition in a separate checked bag and not in the rifle case. Some regulations allow ammo in

the rifle case but it is just easier to keep them apart. Putting it in a different case may avoid a discussion with an airline employee that you would probably rather not have.

On a trip to Canada, the man in front of me was getting his rifle inspected by the Canadian Customs folks. When the

officer opened the bolt of the man's rifle, an empty brass flew out, giving everyone a start. Even though it was just an empty case, it still created some tense moments.

Do not allow anyone else to handle your firearm cases once you are at the airport. Walk your case to the ticket counter rather than using one of the luggage handlers often found at the entrances. Never leave your case unattended under any circumstances.

When you arrive at the airline ticket counter you must declare your firearm and sign a firearm unloaded declaration form in front of the ticket agent. Don't just blurt out "I have a gun," or something else to trip their alarms. I usually say, "May I have a firearm declaration form, because I have a firearm to declare." I have never had a problem using that approach.

The rifle case must be locked. The TSA regulations do not say specifically that the case must be locked on every separate locking place, some airlines do. Again, I error on the side of caution and anchor them all. Most cases have 2 separate locking points. I have run into TSA agents who insist all locking points be locked.

Speaking of locks, I prefer combination locks. I set the combinations on something easy for me to remember and I don't have to worry about losing the keys.

I have been in airports where TSA demands TSA locks, and others where regular locks are required. I usually opt for the TSA locks but carry a couple spare regular locks in my carry-on bag. If you use the regular locks, most of the time TSA will cut them off for inspection. Better to have both with you because you just don't know who you are going to be dealing with. Carry a couple extra locks in your carry-on bag, just in case.

Make sure your gun case is labeled

properly with a nametag. It is a good idea to use a paint pen and write your name, address and phone number on the outside of the case in a very conspicuous place in case the nametag gets separated. I do this on all the bags I travel with.

Carry your passport with you and keep it accessible when you get to the baggage pick-up area. Rifle cases do not usually come out on the luggage carousel because they are too long and must be given directly to the person who declared it at the departing airport. Usually a quick look at your passport to confirm the name and you are on your way.

You are usually travelling with 2 checked bags. The rifle case will have some extra space and you might as well take advantage of it. I carry my extra jackets, shirts, soft items that give extra padding and can be compressed when the case is closed. Don't carry a bunch of little items that explode all over the floor when the case is opened for inspection, lest you seek some embarrassing moments.

It may sound like a big hassle, but it really isn't, especially if you play by the rules. The feeling of confidence you will have from hunting with your own gun, the one you have practiced with and know so well, makes any inconvenience you may encounter worthwhile. Remember that TSA is there for our safety, and they do a pretty good job for us. Give them a thank you as you pass through the airport.

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



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If you are taking to the friendly skies this holiday season, or on a future hunting trip, and firearms are going with you, here are a hints to make your travel easier. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)