

## Social distancing with rod in hand

Regular readers know that the Friday paper has a regular rotation of columnists with an outdoor theme. For my turn, subject matter has a seasonality to it. Since I write primarily about fishing, summer to winter and in-between has a great bearing on what I experience and what I write. I've been doing it for 24 years. All in all, I hope you find it entertaining and informative.

For my Friday space this time, all I know for sure is what I had planned to write about is not what I will write about so maybe some rambling here. I had planned to write about an upcoming event, the Fly Fishing Film Tour. This is a fishing themed, short film collection, annually put together by a private company into a showing that is presented all across the country. Montrose and Ridgway have hosted the event in years past, and planned to do so again this year, but like so much else, has been cancelled due to the virus.

The Film Tour this year is of special interest to me because, well, selfishly, I am briefly in one of the films. The film, about 10 minutes long, is called "Project Rainbow". It documents the ongoing efforts to recover rainbow trout populations in the Gunnison River from past decades decline due to whirling disease. Having been a fisherman of the Gunnison River, and my decades of experience with the Black Canyon, I was fortunate to be chosen to go along with the film crew on a float trip in the Gunnison Gorge last summer. The film was produced by Hogleg Fishing and the float was geared by RIGS fly shop in Ridgway. So hopefully this and all the other events being cancelled are but a postponement, and on some future Friday I can write more about the film tour, the locals who organize and sponsor it, and the non-profits who benefit from its ticket proceeds.

So what to write about? The virus is a serious issue medically, and socially has been disruptive of everyday life, especially to those whose income is at risk and of school age families. So while I do take it seriously, I have noted with humor in my social media posts that Mother Nature has not cancelled the river flows, so to practice social distancing and self-quarantine, it seems a good idea to go fishing.

And I have been doing that. Most recently I took my 6-year-old twin granddaughters ice fishing for the first time. This has been on my mind and loosely planned all winter long. I get out on the ice a number of times during the winter season, but for little kids, I wanted to wait until the deep cold of Dec. and Jan. was past. So off we went to Grand Mesa and Island Lake. Island Lake is one of the hardwaters I enjoy; Blue Mesa, Miramonte, Crawford, Vega to name a few others.

Although other waters have larger fish, I don't necessarily always have a good day of catching. Island Lake is almost always productive. The fish are typically small, 8 - 10 inches being common. But with kids and the need to actually catch a fish being more important than



### Outdoors

By Joel L. Evans

size, I wanted to increase my odds with a known probability. Upon our arrival, the sun was shining but the wind was blowing as it had not been in the valley. Wind and cold of course mean a discomforting chill to kids, so I was immediately at risk of turning back to home.

But they were eager. Out on the lake, conditions were not ideal, but we set up and I drilled two holes. Being twins, they are accustomed to two of everything. I was prepared with two holes, two rods, two chairs, two snacks - you get the idea. As I prepared the rods to fish, one of the girls accidentally put her foot into the just drilled hole. Wet and winter are bad news, so I knew immediately our time was short. I took off her wet boot and socks, took off my boot and shed the first layer sock, put it on her, and put her foot in a plastic bag. A temporary fix, but enough to at least fish for a few minutes before packing up to leave. We had a few bites, caught one fish, and after about 15 minutes began packing to return to the truck. Not the first time experience we had hoped for, but they seemed to take it in stride and wanted to come back another day.

Back to social distancing and fishing. I haven't thought of it in the sense we are now experiencing for health reasons, but it occurs to me that I've had a lot of experience at social distancing. Fishing trips are often with a friend or two, but never a crowd and often by myself. I guess that makes me an expert distancer. So calling upon that experience, and the benefit of daylight savings time, I left work mid-afternoon last week and distanced myself to the Uncompahgre River in town.

Fishing was good, and this being what fishermen would consider the "off-season". Although not historically so, the Uncompahgre is a good river and has the potential to be great. Without going into detail, decades of effort in multiple ways by multiple parties has resulted in a quality backyard fishery. And there is more to come. The most recent addition of the previously private and now public Colorado Outdoors property is a major benefit and addition. I applaud Mayfly for being public-minded.

The lower Gunnison has awoken for early spring fishing fanatics. Another distancing opportunity.

Well enough rambling. Even a fishing fanatic will say, family first. Take care. Parents, looking for something to do with school kids? Take them fishing. Adults, go fishing. Again, Mother Nature has not cancelled river flows.

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

## Shelter in place for now



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Looking back, I have survived the bird flu, swine flu, Hong Kong flu, MERS, SARS, Y2K and an unbelievable amount of dangerous exposures as a first responder. Now we are facing a threat from COVID-19, the latest in the endless stream of threats to my existence. Bring it.

I don't mean to make light of the threat; it has the potential to be very deadly. Fortunately, we have a strong response from our state and federal government in an attempt to stop the spread. Our own county response is in full gear with combined efforts from emergency management, public health and many other agencies. Most people, over 75 percent, infected with the coronavirus will experience only mild symptoms. It does not, however, mean we should not be prepared.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates nine to 45 million people in the United States catch the flu annually, resulting in 140,000 to 810,000 hospital stays for the more serious cases. Each year between 12,000 and 61,000 of our citizens die from the flu. It is definitely not something to take lightly.

There is a distinct possibility that an outbreak could strike us here in Montrose. The coronavirus has been declared a global pandemic. Our airport services a number of international airports on a daily basis. If there is an outbreak in another part of the world, it's coming to Montrose.

If a local outbreak were to infect 50 percent or more of our Montrose citizens, it would put an incredible strain on our resources. Staff from hospitals, doctors offices, police, fire and EMS would all be stressed because of the number of their people out sick. It won't stop there.

Businesses, schools, power plants, water plants and grocery stores would be closed because too many staff are out sick, or they are home taking care of their families.

A shutdown in another part of the country could cause us to suffer an interruption in the supply train, leaving us without food in the stores, fuel, medicines and just about everything else we as consumers use. Are you prepared for such an event?

It does not have to be a pandemic that causes a shutdown. I remember walking to the grocery store during the Cuban Missile Crisis with



When you are preparing for a possible pandemic, and laying up supplies so you may shelter in place, remember the furry kids are doing to want to eat also. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

my grandmother, only to find nothing but bare shelves. All of the food, be it canned, frozen or fresh, was gone.

Because of the rural nature of Montrose County, we are generally better prepared than the people in the big cities. Most of us don't run to the store every day for food. Generally we shop once every week or two and have a fair amount of food supplies laid in.

The CDC and FEMA recommend every person have at least a 14 day supply of food, water, and medicines stored up for each member of the household, in the event you are required to shelter within your home. Personally, I would suggest at least a 30-day supply. You just never know how long it will take to get things back to normal. I have seen hurricanes disrupt service for many months.

Start with a supply of fresh water for drinking. You can always bucket ditch water to flush the toilets. Clorox bleach is the old standby for water purification. A gallon of water and 16 drops of bleach, and let it stand for an hour before drinking.

You can also shut off the intake line to your hot water heater. This will leave you with 30 to 50 gallons of water, depending on the size of your tank. Barrels or jugs filled with stored drinking water, and cases of bottled water, should be rotated out periodically.

Nonperishable foods such as freeze-dried or dehydrated can be purchased in sealed containers that can be safely stored for upwards of 25 years. Add a selection of canned fruits, meats and vegetables, which you should also rotate out to keep fresh dates, and you should be good to go.

Those of us with special medications should have at least a 30-day supply on hand. Discuss your preparedness with your family doctor and he or she will usually provide you with an emergency stockpile. Most medications have an expiration date and should be rotated out also.

Another member of the family you don't want to forget are the furry kids. Dogs, cats, birds, horses and livestock will all want to eat, so a good supply for them should be put up as well. If they have special medicines, store some of that also.

Another thing I learned living

through the hurricanes was to set aside cash for just such an emergency. Your credit and debit cards will probably be useless for a while, until things settle down. Good old greenbacks will work with just about everyone for trade items you need.

Consider how you are going to cook your food. Propane stove or grill with several bottles of propane will work fine for emergency cooking. During the winter months consider how you are going to keep the house warm. Those with a wood stove or fireplace will want to store up extra firewood.

A generator is a great power source, as long as you have enough fuel stored up to run it. The generator only needs to run an hour every 12 hours to keep a freezer cold as long as you keep the door closed. Things like video games and television will have to wait until power is restored.

You can't go out and just buy a bunch of extra supplies. You must change your mindset and lifestyle. You could start out with four cases of water, canned fruit and vegetables. Use one of each case through your normal living, and simply replace it. Maintaining your stockpile and rotating items to keep them fresh is necessary.

The time to prepare is now, not when the pandemic is here. You don't want to run to the store and find empty shelves. The panicked crowd all wait until the last minute. When that time comes, you want to be sitting in your fully stocked home, watching the world go by.

There is a great deal of information available online. Search [www.readycolorado.com](http://www.readycolorado.com). I am sure this latest scare shall pass and we will all weather the storm, but it is better to be prepared, just in case.

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