



Your favorite hiking area may not look the same in January as it did last July, but it would still do you good to get outside for a hike. (Courtesy photo/Dan Hiebert)

Day hikes during winter — prepare and enjoy

Once Christmas and New Year’s pass, we are stuck with the longest time of the year. I hate, no, I loathe, January and February. The winter winds howl down the chimney and the pile of wood in the bin is getting low. Last hunting season is but a distant memory, and next season of fishing, hunting and camping is so far in the future that it is not worth mentioning.

I know that God created this time of the year, on the off chance that eternity should prove to be too short. February, by itself, lasts forever plus two weeks.

I was staring out the window when my wife of many years walked in and said, “Will you stop standing in the corner and staring out the window, you are giving me the creeps. Get a hobby or something.”

“I am practicing my melancholy stare. All great writers have a melancholy stare because of all the pain and suffering they have seen. Besides, staring out the window is my winter hobby,” I replied.

My wife left the room with a deep sigh, and I returned to my staring out the window. Wives understand nothing about the stress induced at this time of the year.

There is a little something you can do to make this time pass a little easier. Go for a hike, a winter hike. Yeah, I know, don’t throw things at me. Hear me out on this. It is not too hot, you won’t be bothered by mosquitoes, you will have the trail



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

to yourself, and you can easily find a good parking spot. The best part, it gives you something outdoor to do, and clears your head of all the winter doom and gloom. It does, however, require a few special details.

Start out with the right boot, one with very aggressive tread for the snow and ice. The leather boots you wore all summer would be better left until next summer. Look for waterproof and well insulated material that will lace up past your ankles. You want all the support you can get on the snowy trail.

Get yourself a really good pair of hiking socks. Wool is your friend here because they will insulate even when wet from water or perspiration. You don’t have to get the thickest pair either, remember, you want to walk in them, not sit still.

You may consider getting some spikes for your boots if you will be traversing any type of ice. For me, I try and avoid the ice and walk around, but sometimes it can’t be avoided. Microspikes brand seem to work best for me. If your hike is going to take you across the

frozen expanses of Blue Mesa Reservoir, the spikes are a necessity.

Another thing I have really learned the value of is a good pair of gaiters. I wear gaiters most of the year to keep burrs and stickers out of my legs. In the winter, the gaiters will keep your legs dry and prevent snow from entering the tops of your boots. Once pant legs get wet, they will freeze to your legs creating a whole new type of misery when the temperatures drop. Gaiters prevent this misery.

In your pack, make sure you have plenty of high energy foods. Extra calories are required to keep your body warm, fuel your activity and humidify the air that you breathe. Besides the heavier clothing and footwear, you are using in the cold, you also have your pack and any other equipment you may be carrying.

If you are trekking through the snow, additional demands are made on your body. Winter backpacking can require an additional 500 to 1000 calories a day. Studies show that an average man burns 4,500 calories backpacking for a day in the winter while a woman burns an average of 3,500 per day.

Foods, like very high energy and high protein bars help, as does beef jerky. Look for foods without all that sugar so you don’t get that crash. This is one time you want fatty foods like dried pork sausage and nuts, like almonds, cashews and pecans.

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Fishing with kingfishers on the Uncompahgre



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

The rays of a gentle January sun warm my back. There are fish in the pools down along the Uncompahgre River, but they seem to be perfectly safe from my casting. My fly fishing skills are . . . limited.

I hear a rattling chatter from a bird over my left shoulder. It’s not a harmonious song, like from a robin, but more of a scratchy prattle issued forth in bursts. On a branch above the river is a female belted kingfisher. Better at catching her prey than I, she adds vibrancy to the afternoon.

Wildlife is hunkered down in winter — less daylight, cold temperatures, and scarce food sources mean survival is a struggle. But as long as there is open water, kingfishers will find prey. Her “song” is a like a melody of life, even in the dead of winter. The song belongs here.

Her plumage is slate-blue on the head, wings, and back, but the coloring on her front — a russet band of feathers that cuts across a field of white on her belly and under her wings — gives away her gender. Males lack the chestnut color. Unlike most species in the bird world, the female belted kingfisher (*Megasceryle alcyon*) is more colorful than the male.

She seems OK with my presence; possibly because I stink as an angler. On the other hand, she is very adept at catching fish and other prey.

From any branch, sometimes as high as 20 feet over the water, a kingfisher will search for fish, crawfish, insects, tadpoles. The pools must be clear for the birds to see their dinner. Shallow water is better; two feet or less. Ripples separating the pools set up very attractive hunting habitat.

The Uncompahgre is perfect for such a setting. I

cast my line a couple more times. With such conditions, I should be able to catch something. She chatters again. Maybe she’s coaching me.

She’s a small bird; a little bigger than a robin. She squats on the limb, shoulders pressing outward. She seems comfortable. Crawfish will be her cuisine for much of the winter. If she spots something in the pool upstream, her interest in my activity will change.

Like a javelin launched from the branch, her wings tuck inward as she lunges to the pool. Shoulder, elbow, and manus (wrist) will pull in at a 45-degree angle. She may turn as she zeros in on the water. Her dagger-like beak quickly opens under water to snatch the prey. The wings spread to bring the bird back to the surface and then flap up to the roost.

After choking down the meal, she shakes the water off her feathers. The plumes on top of her head end up strewn about. The ruffled appearance harkens an image of Beethoven. These birds are endearing.

Wishing I could catch fish as easily as a kingfisher, I think about a recent study from biologists at the University of British Columbia. They found that the range of motion (ROM) in birds’ wings is a significant aspect of bird flight, and that ROM varies greatly in wing joints of different species. The way that birds move their wings in flight is more important than the actual shape of the wing.

Heavier bird species, for instance, have less dexterity in bending and twisting. In fact, the shape of specific bones will restrict a wing’s flexibility. Their joints are used more for soaring or gliding.

The research suggests that aircraft and drone design could be influenced by the findings. Their work included belted kingfishers, but details about their wings as they plunge into water were not provided.

I move upriver to try casting into another pool. And still I wonder, as I work my shoulder, elbow and wrist casting the line into the water. Could the diving flight pattern of birds like the kingfisher provide greater vision for safer aircraft?

It’s easy to dismiss lesser-known animal species simply because they are less visible in our digital, high-speed human world. We are too busy indoors, or caught up shwooshing down ski runs. Birds like this could be viewed as unimportant. Maybe that’s a shortcoming of ours.

The sun’s rays are softening. The afternoon balm-iness is evaporating. I toss the line into the pool a few more times. Her prattling song rings out over the river again. It’s just bird and me. The river babbles its way downstream. I’m humbly reminded that much life belongs to our world.

It didn’t matter that I caught no fish. The afternoon was a complete success.

Paul Zaenger is a retired National Park Service supervisory park ranger from the National Park Service. Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area are among his park assignments. He can be reached at zae@bresnan.net



Scenes along the Uncompahgre River provide mellowing experiences whether you’re fishing or not. Kingfishers can be found in stretches of river at the Ute Indian Museum, River Bottom Park, and along the Montrose Riverway Trail, from the West Main Trailhead downstream. (Courtesy photo)



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Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters speaks during a rally organized by the Truth & Liberty Coalition in support of her. The rally took place on Dec. 1, 2021, in front of the old Mesa County courthouse in Grand Junction. (Sharon Sullivan/Colorado Newsline)

Ethics complaint alleges Tina Peters’ legal defense fund lacks transparency

Complaint filed with Colorado Independent Ethics Commission

By SHARON SULLIVAN
COLORADO NEWSLINE

Embattled Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters will have 30 days to respond to a second ethics complaint filed with the Colorado Independent Ethics Commission, which on Tuesday determined the complaint to be “non-frivolous.” Peters is already under local, state and federal investigations for alleged criminal misconduct regarding election security breaches in Mesa County. Officials announced Jan. 13, that a grand jury will also investigate allegations that Peters tampered with Mesa County election equipment. To help with her legal woes, Peters for the past several months has been soliciting donations at various rallies and on her website, standwithtina.org. The new ethics complaint, filed by Grand Junction resident and political blogger Anne Landman, includes a video link of Peters asking for donations at an event held in September at Appleton Christian Church in Grand Junction following Peters’ return to the city after hiding for several weeks from state authorities. Landman alleges in the complaint that Peters has been illegally accepting donations as an elected official. The complaint says Peters is violating Colorado Constitution rules regarding conduct of public officials. Peters’ web site asking for money describes Peters as “the courageous County Clerk of Mesa County, Colorado, in charge of the county elections,” which makes it clear she is soliciting funds in her capacity as an elected official — as opposed to as a private individual,

said Landman. While the IEC allows officials to solicit donations to help cover costs associated with criminal charges (Peters has yet to be charged) it also requires that the names of donors and the amount of money collected be reported to the state — which Peters has not done. “The whole point of the Fair Campaign Practices Act is transparency — which I thought Tina was all for,” said former Mesa County Clerk Sheila Reiner, who’s currently the Mesa County treasurer and public trustee. “I have always taken the filing requirements for my candidacy seriously. If the secretary of state doesn’t follow up then I think we will see other candidates believe that they don’t have to heed the laws and regulations either.” **Peters lawyer Gessler had similar ethics complaint** In September, Colorado Politics reported that Peters’ legal defense fund could violate Colorado’s ethics rules, according to former IEC executive director and Denver attorney Jane Feldman who stated: “The donations must be publicly disclosed, and must be administered by someone not directly affiliated with the clerk.” “In addition, no donations may be accepted if the donor is a lobbyist,” Feldman told Colorado Politics. “The solicitation on her website contain none of those conditions, and therefore may cause violations of the gift ban.” Feldman was IEC executive director in 2013 when the commission issued a response to then-Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler’s request for IEC

guidance on how he could legally set up a criminal defense fund for an issue he was facing. Gessler is currently Peters’ attorney. “Scott Gessler himself had a complaint against him for expenditures deemed unethical,” Landman said. “He asked IEC for guidance. He should know. He should be advising her. He was in the same position as Tina.” Landman filed her first ethics complaint against Peters in September. That complaint alleged Peters improperly accepted financial compensation or gifts in excess of what’s allowed under the Colorado Constitution. Conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell, CEO of MyPillow and a staunch supporter of former President Donald Trump, reportedly flew Peters to South Dakota for a “cyber symposium” and paid for hotels and meals during the weeks that Peters was in hiding. Lindell has spoken about his financial assistance to Peters, on a YouTube video and to The Washington Post. The IEC and Peters will meet in February regarding the ethics complaint filed in September. Peters has asked counsel to stay proceedings before the commission, said IEC executive director Dino Ioannides. Peters has 30 days to respond to the new complaint, he said. “After a response, or nonresponse, the commission will instruct me whether to commence an investigation,” followed by a report and then a hearing, where both parties present their case before the commission, Ioannides said. Peters did not respond for comment by press time.

El Pomar awards grants to 5 area nonprofits

SPECIAL TO THE MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

El Pomar Trustees approved \$51,000 allocated to five nonprofit organizations in the San Juan region at the Foundation’s December Trustees meeting. The following organizations were awarded grants: • Adaptive Sports Center of Crested Butte, Inc. — \$10,000 in general operating support; • Olathe Community Clini, Inc. — \$20,000 for new clinic construction; • Ouray Ice Park Incorporated — \$10,000 for infrastructure addition; • PEER Kindness Inc. (Montrose) — \$3,500 for creation of a logic model; • End of the Trail Rescue (Olathe) — \$7,500 for direct care of equines; Sally Beck Fund. Founded by Spencer and Julie Penrose in 1937, El Pomar Foundation has an established legacy of general purpose grant making throughout the state of Colorado. The competitive process remains the foundation’s primary vehicle for organizations to receive funding, which accepts applications on a rolling basis. Additionally, over the last 80 years, El Pomar has either developed or been entrusted with the stewardship of a number of other funds, as well as presenting merit grants in each region recommended by Trustees and regional council members. In an effort to increase impact and establish connections across the entire state, the Regional Partnerships program was established in 2003. Each of the foundation’s 11 regional councils advises El Pomar Trustees and recommends grants to help support its communities. The San Juan Regional Council recommends grants in Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, San Miguel and Ouray counties. Council members are regional leaders in the business, nonprofit, and public sectors and provide first-hand information about current needs in their own communities. The Sally Beck Fund supports organizations providing direct care to equines, therapeutic riding programs, equine education programs, and equine-related disaster response programs.

CDOT: 2021 was a deadly year for motorists

By SAM COLE
CDOT

Last year, 672 people were killed on Colorado roadways — the most deaths since 2002. That number is expected to increase as the Colorado Department of Transportation continues to receive additional crash reports. This marks a 50% increase from the 447 fatalities recorded in 2011. “We allocate tremendous resources into maintaining a safe and reliable statewide travel system,” said John Lorme, Director of Maintenance & Operations for CDOT. “However, the most important resource is the driver, and that’s where we see safety falter. Drivers making poor decisions — whether it’s speeding, being on their phones, or not buckling up — cause more than 90% of the fatal crashes on our roadways.” Last year fatalities involving impaired drivers increased 16% from 212 in 2020 to 246 in 2021. While fatal motorcycle, pedestrian and bicycle crashes remained relatively steady last year, fatalities involving vehicle occupants skyrocketed — up 22%. Many of these crashes involved people not wearing seat belts. Seat belts save an estimated 200 lives each year in Colorado, but seat belt use in the state still lags behind the national rate. “For the average Coloradoan, the most dangerous

thing you will do all day is driving. These trends are tragic and unacceptable,” said Col. Matthew Packard, Chief of the Colorado State Patrol. “It’s why Colorado State Patrol will continue its low-tolerance enforcement strategy to educate or remove drivers putting lives at risk. But, enforcement efforts alone won’t solve the problem of rising fatalities on our roadways. We need drivers to do their part and set the right example. We need to care enough to change this — we need to care enough to make safe choices behind the wheel.” The fatality trends are present in both rural and urban areas. Preliminary data indicate that fatalities are up 37% in Pueblo County and 29% in Denver County. The most road fatalities last year occurred in El Paso, Adams, Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe and Weld counties. CDOT, Colorado State Patrol and other statewide traffic safety advocates call on drivers statewide to: • Never drive after consuming alcohol, marijuana or other drugs; • Avoid speeding; • Always buckle up, no matter the distance; • Never text and drive; • Use extra caution around pedestrians and bicyclists. *Sam Cole is the communications manager for the Colorado Department of Transportation.*

WINTER

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The most important element in your activity is water. Even though you may not be thirsty, drink it anyway. In winter, it is common to experience dehydration because there is less humidity. The lower humidity has a drying effect on your body, and you must replace those fluids lost from respiration, evaporation and perspiration.

An active person should consume between 2 and 4 quarts of water a day during an active winter’s day. I know this sounds like a lot of water, and it is difficult for me to drink that much water, but it is necessary, especially on your hike. The last two things I would remind you of are for your own safety. Leave an itinerary with someone responsible who will call for help if you don’t return. If nobody knows your where-

abouts or that you are missing, you may be in for a long winter until somebody notices you are missing. Old Fido will be staring into an empty food bowl, so let somebody know what you are doing. Secondly, bring a pack with some gear incase the bottom falls out of your trip. Some extra clothes and some fire making supplies will go a long way in keeping you safe. It sounds like a lot of work for a short-day

hike, but it really is no more preparation that a trip at other times of the year, just different things to bring and wear. Perhaps getting out of the house and going for a short hike in the trees is just what I needed. The landscape is gorgeous this time of year, and the sunlight was good for me. Now I need to head home and go back to staring out the window. It’s kind of fun creeping her out, but don’t tell her I said that.

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@icloud.com