

Fish and game of all types are affected by the moon. Solar tables try and predict active feeding times. (Photo /Mark Rackay)

The sun, the moon, and fishing, hunting

By the time I was 12, I was never without a fishing rod or a hunting rifle in hand. This made it awkward in certain social situations like church or taking a shower, nevertheless, I was truly blessed to spend all my waking moments in pursuit of fish and game. The only hindrance in the mix was school.

I had left school early, or just skipped it altogether so many times, with the excuse that I was "sick" that the principal would have charged me with truancy, had he not been convinced that I was on my deathbed with a terminal illness.

By the time I was in my 20s tragedy struck, and I found myself with a fulltime job, wife, kids, mortgage, taxes, or as Zorba the Greek once said, "The full catastrophe." All of these obligations brought an abrupt end to my time afield, as I am sure many of you can relate.

At that stage of life, called being a grownup, which incidentally, my wife says I have yet to reach, anytime spent outdoors in pursuit of fish or game should be done at peak times when the game is moving, and fish are feeding.

Any outdoor person worth their salt will tell you it is all about time of day, sunrise or sunset, wind direction, barometric pressure, weather systems, incoming or outgoing tides, slack tides, moon phase, and the list of potential excuses goes on ad nauseum. If I were to wait for all of these things to line up, I would never get out and fish or hunt.

Apparently, this is not a new problem. A gentleman by the name of John Alden Knight was plagued by never being off work when the fish were biting. He was always on the river a day late, with the "you should have been here yesterday" crowd was around. You know those folks, always off work at just the right

Knight started col-



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

lecting data on factors that affected fishing and hunting, including some folklore. He used information about the sun and the moon, hence the name solunar, sol for sun and lunar for moon. He compiled a list of 33 factors which control or influence the day-to-day behavior of fish and game. In the end, all but three factors were rejected.

The factors he kept were the sun, moon and the tides. The position of the sun and the moon, relative to each other, proved to influence when fish and game were most likely to be moving about. In addition, the time of moonrise and moonset, and moon directly overhead or directly underneath, all created activity times.

Knowing when the sunrise and sunset times are is important to everyone outdoors because that is a general activity time for fish and game. For hunters, tides are not a factor, as they use the alignment of the sun and moon to determine when game is most likely to be moving.

Solunar tables predict four periods of game activity, two major and two minor, every 24 hours corresponding to the moon's position relative to the earth, and the sun's position relative to the earth and moon.

Major periods are the longest, spanning up to 90 minutes. The major occurs when the moon is directly overhead or directly underneath. When the moon is midway between the two majors, a minor activity comes forth. The minor can be as active as a major, but

for a shorter duration, often lasting up to 45 minutes.

If the major or minor coincides with a sunrise or sunset, the activity can be off the charts. Those are the perfect times for you to be in the woods or on the river. If you can plan your day around those times, you will have the best opportunities to

A solunar table can dictate an increase in activity due to a full moon, or the moon being directly overhead, but other things can cause th game to be more active or less active. Weather is the biggest factor in letting the air out of your day planned around the solunar tables.

Overall, a solunar table can be a tool when planning an excursion into the woods or waters. Just keep in mind they are not completely accurate in that they do not provide adjustments for environmental conditions such as the weather. Be sure to incorporate weather forecasts in conjunction with your planning.

Are the tables accurate? Generally. Tides, for example, are affected by the topography of the coastline. The times can vary by as much as 20 minutes or more along the same stretch of the coast. It would be impossible for the tables

to incorporate this into their predictions, so don't set your watch by the tables as it is a guide only.

If you are still not convinced, try keeping a record of when you had the most fish or game activity during the day, and compare it with the charts later. Keep it up for several months and I think you will find these tables are quite accurate and helpful in the field.

The problem I found with the tables was that the best days of the month were always days that I had to work. My boss did not accept the "I feel sick" routine, so I always had to stay. That left weekends for hunting and fishing, but as luck would have it, the tables are lousy for the weekend. Just my luck. At least I will have an excuse for not catching anything.

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Time marches on

Late March and the deadline for my outdoor column is approaching. Thing is, I'm not at home to write it. So here goes from the road. I'm off on a spring vacation and penning this from my phone.

I have two thoughts on my mind for late March. One is fishing license renewal and two is the annual Colorado Parks and Wildlife fishing brochure.

So simply put, all fishing licenses expire at the end of March each year. So if you want to fish anytime soon, then get a renewal before April.

It used to be that licenses expired at the end of December. But it has been a number of years since the change was made to March, to coincide more with what most anglers consider the beginning of fishing season. But I still hear anglers say something about December.

And then there is that logic of the start of fishing season. Says who? Many anglers, myself included, fish year-round. Either as river fishermen in the few but nonetheless available open winter rivers. Or the fun days of ice fishing in January and February and March.

License renewal is available online, at certain local retailers, and at the local Montrose CPW office. I've crossed onto the cheap zone for an annual license. Being a senior, my annual cost is a mere \$10.23. I add a second rod stamp, plus the habitat stamp, so a little more but still inexpensive.

Other license options for residents include a one-day at \$14.46; annual adult at \$36.71 and youth 16-17 at \$10.23, as well as a fishing and small game combo. Youth under 16 do not require a license. Non-resident options are one-day, five-day or annual.

Remember, CPW does not get state tax funds and is supported by licenses.

The first section I look to



Outdoors

By Joel L. Evans

with each year's new brochure is the "What's New". This is where major changes are highlighted. I am always curious if some change has come that affects me directly due to the waters I commonly fish.

For 2022, the changes seem to be minimal and not about local Montrose area waters, so I'll leave those for you to read about yourself.

As always, the brochure has great information about state records, gold medal trout rivers, wild trout waters, and the Master Angler Program.

Most of the pages are the specific fishing water regulations. While the regulations themselves are highly important, this is a great resource for where to go fishing. Although the text of the pages is about fishing regulations, don't overlook this is a comprehensive list of waters, maps included, that have potential. The brochure is available in print locally and online.

One section that is mournful for it to even be included is the listing of waters where certain fish species have been illegally introduced. Included in the list of 10 waters statewide is Ridgway Reservoir where smallmouth bass now exist. This is both bad and sad this ever happened, with no way to reverse it.

It's been a few years since a new state record trout has been registered. Maybe this is your year. Wait, maybe this is my year!

Joel L. Evans is an avid fisherman, outdoor writer and photographer, who has On to the fishing brochure. explored Western Colorado for decades.



One doesn't have to travel far to have a river to fish. The Uncompangre River in the Montrose city limits has much to offer. (Photo/Joel Evans)

