



Nothing makes a stretch of water look more interesting than a couple of old “No Trespassing” signs but you had best seek permission. (Submitted/Mark Rackay)

## Seek permission for your hunting and fishin’

Everyone has a tiny chink in their armor of honesty. There is nothing that makes a stretch of river more inviting than a scattering of “No Trespassing” signs. My old man mentor, Mr. Caster, who taught me everything I know about hunting, fishing, women, whiskey, smoking, and all things outdoors, was no exception.

Our town had a water supply reservoir that was fed by a river. The first 4 miles of that river was very thick with willows, trees, underbrush, and “No Trespassing” signs. The water board was very emphatic about not wanting people near that river and dirtying the water the town drinks.

Mr. Caster fished that stretch of river for better than 40 years. He would sneak into the river’s brushy cover in the pre-dawn darkness, and return after sunset, usually with a large stringer of trout.

Mr. Caster’s reasoning was simple. He would remove trout from the river that were no doubt dirtying the drinking water, since trout do everything they do in that water. Secondly, Mr. Caster got his drinking water from a well.

Many of the best fishing and hunting can be had on private property. Problem is, most landowners don’t want anyone traipsing all over their land, and who can blame them? I have seen firsthand the lack of respect people have for land they have been granted access to, from litter, beer cans, gates left open, driving on hay meadows, and generally a total disregard for the property.

I have spent a lifetime knocking on farmhouse doors, seeking permis-



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

sion to hunt or fish on property. Many times, the answer is no, and you have to accept that. Just thank the farmer and move on. They may have the ground leased or have had bad experience with people on their land in the past.

To start with, be sure you ask the right person. I was once given permission to hunt on a wheat farm by someone who did not own the farm. When the real owner caught me there, it was a tense situation for a few minutes before we sorted it out.

Sometime the owners live on the land and other times, they don’t. Check the records at the county courthouse before you hit the road looking for property to recreate on. The On X program for your cell phone or GPS comes in real handy here. The program shows you property boundaries and ownership information.

You need to get away from town when searching for property. Close to town, the land parcels and usually smaller, and the owners have been inundated with requests for access. It seems that the farther you are from town, the more likely you are to get permission for access. A lot of land is leased up by outfitters and hunting groups but keep searching and you will eventually hit pay dirt.

Most farmers have a problem with predators,

like coyotes and prairie dogs. Farmers rarely have the time to thin out the predators from their property, because they are too busy with farm work. These folks usually welcome someone coming in and helping control these pests. I have hunted predators for farmers, all the while showing them I will treat their land respectfully and hunt safely, to later be rewarded with permission to fish or hunt game at a later date. Through this process, I have made several longstanding relationships with some landowners.

Be mindful of your appearance when you visit the farm asking permission. You don’t want to look like the face on a milk carton. Avoid flashy and brand-new clothes because it makes you look like a beginner. Be clean and respectful.

The same can be said about your vehicle. Don’t show up with headers and glass packs blasting, or big mudder tires. A truck covered in mud tells the landowner that you may tear up all his fields by running amok in them. And don’t have your vehicle all pasted up with political or obnoxious bumper stickers. Remember, you don’t know these folks and don’t want to get off on the wrong foot.

When the landowner does grant you permission, be very gracious for it, and let him know you appreciate his granting you access. Assure him you will close gates, stay away from areas he does not want you to go, and generally, leave no trace. At the end of the day, it is a good idea to stop back at the house and thank him again.

See HUNTING page A12

## Learning to be a young citizen of science

### Friends of Youth and Nature

By Carrie Krickbaum

*Chick-a-de-de-de-de, chickadee in the tree, I see a chickadee, chickadee in the tree.*

Making up quick songs while hiking with little kids in the woods is a fun way to connect and remember birds. Chickadees are a favorite for kids and adults of all ages because the words we use to describe their song is also their name!

Another fun bird call to listen for on the trail is the Ruby Crowned Kinglet. It is called the “cheeseburger bird” because the mnemonic for its song is “cheeseburger, cheeseburger, cheeseburger”. Mnemonics (words to help us remember) are fun and easy to learn (<https://tinyurl.com/auduboncalls>)

What’s another way to get kids interested in birds? It could be as simple as buying a pair of binoculars and a basic bird book, or taking walks in the woods to just look and listen.

There are also many children’s books that can introduce kids to the wonder and beauty of nature with a variety of cultural interests. One example is a children’s book about the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and how it became part of a movement to embrace Indigenous languages in Mexico (<https://tinyurl.com/audubonmayan>)

The Audubon website has activities for kids and virtual events available for families. Here is an example of a virtual event on the site: <https://tinyurl.com/audubonsnow>

Audubon also has a page on its website that is JUST FOR KIDS! (Or kids at heart). The page “aims to bring together activities from across Audubon’s national network of environmental educators, including the classroom curriculum Audubon Adventures, plus related DIY activities and content from Audubon’s editors: <https://tinyurl.com/audubonoutkid>

One doesn’t need to be an expert; maybe just being a “student” along with a child is a fun way to learn and bond together. The more kids love and understand our natural world, the more they will want to protect it. <https://tinyurl.com/audoboneasybird>



Many little hands release a Wilson’s warbler after it was banded at Ridgway State Park. Students observe and assist bird banders as part of the Rocky Mountain Bird Banding Project. The banding operation occurs annually in early September. (Courtesy photo/ Anita Evans).

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology also has many resources on its website. Here is a link to a fun video about getting kids interested in birding: <https://tinyurl.com/birdkidwatch>

### Citizen Science Projects to do with Children and Teens

There are several citizen science projects through Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, such as the great backyard bird count. <https://www.birdcount.org/>. Also, a fun app to use on your phone while out in the field is iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>. It has a variety of uses to not only record what you see with pictures and descriptions, but other users can help you identify your plant, bird, bug, or whatever else you’ve seen in the natural world.

Who doesn’t enjoy seeing a butterfly, flitting around some flowers? As important pollinators it is important to protect these wonderful creatures. Since they are an “indicator species” (project the health of the environment), awareness of their importance is increased.

Ridgway State Park started a citizen science project through the Colorado Butterfly Monitoring Network in 2017. Interested volunteers attended a training at the Butterfly Pavilion in Westminster, Colorado in 2015. There are now five routes in the park consistently monitored by volunteers. The idea is to expand this to other areas on the Western Slope next year.

If you’d like to learn about starting a route for you and other families, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/butterflymon>.

Not only can you look into the Colorado

Butterfly Monitoring Network, there are many other sites to look at. Maybe you want to help monarch butterflies by establishing a certified “waystation” for these migratory butterflies. This site also has links to other monarch butterfly projects. <https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>

**Other Outdoor Activities**  
Orienteering — Do some orienteering with your kids! It’s a great way to learn how to use a map and a compass. There are several sites you can go to for guidance before you head out with your kids. One example is: <https://rainydaymum.co.uk/orienteering-with-kids/>

Geocaching – It’s like a treasure hunt! Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity in which participants use a GPS or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called “geocaches” or “caches”, at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world. It’s fun for them to see what “treasures” people have left behind in the “caches.”

It’s great for getting out to explore places that you never thought of going. Go to <https://www.geocaching.com/play> to find out more and look at the available apps.

With each interaction in nature, children can acquire a sensitivity to nature’s elements. The more kids love and understand our natural world, the more they will want to protect it. Nature experiences can light up a spark of fascination and curiosity, and elicit many questions. Whether it involves plants, birds, butterflies or other critters, citizen science projects are a great way to engage your child with nature.

See CITIZEN page A12



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CPW ANS Inspector Travis Beam checks a boat for invasive mussels at the Loma Point of Entry on May 15. (Submitted photo/CPW)

# CPW: More boats found with mussel infestations in 2021

More boats requiring decontamination due to fouling by destructive mussels entered Colorado in 2021 compared to previous years, but the statewide inspection program coordinated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife again succeeded in keeping invasive mussels out of the state's lakes and reservoirs.

"Colorado Parks and Wildlife continues to meet the challenge of protecting the state's waters and infrastructure from aquatic nuisance species," said Robert Walters, CPW's ANS program manager. "But as boating season approaches we continue to ask for help from boat owners in maintaining our mussel-free status."

By Travis Duncan  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Mussels are destructive to aquatic habitat, can seriously damage reservoir infrastructure and cause problems on boats.

Colorado's ANS inspectors were busy during 2021. Staff conducted a total of 514,028 inspections and decontaminated 27,877 boats suspected of carrying mussels, other aquatic invasive species or standing water.

Most concerning is the continued increase in the number of boats fouled with mussels.

In 2019, 86 boats were found to be fouled with invasive mussels. In 2020, that number jumped to 100. And in 2021 that

skyrocketed to 181. Only 16 boats with mussels were found in 2017.

Contaminated boats come into Colorado from neighboring states, especially Utah and Arizona because of our proximity to Lake Powell which has been mussel-infested for years. Other neighboring states with mussel infestations include Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and South Dakota. Most Midwestern and East Coast states also have infested waters.

In 2021, Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 21-1226 which authorized Colorado Parks and Wildlife to implement a pilot roadside watercraft inspection and decontamination program.

The Aquatic Nuisance Species Check Station at the Loma Port of Entry on I-70 will be checking vehicles with watercraft on July 23 and Sept. 5.

Some of the increase in inspections can be attributed to the large influx of outdoor recreation Colorado has experienced since the start of the pandemic. Colorado Parks and Wildlife understands that outdoor recreation is important to everyone's physical and mental health and the state made a commitment to keep state parks open during the pandemic.

Since CPW's ANS inspection program started in 2008, 6.1 million boats have been inspected and 172,460 boats have been decontaminated. The

agency is aided in the program by Colorado counties, municipalities, water districts, federal agencies and private companies that also conduct inspections.

CPW also works proactively looking for aquatic nuisance species by sampling waters throughout the state. In 2021, crews sampled 157 standing waters and eight flowing waters. The National Park Service provided CPW with 31 water samples.

CPW has also been instrumental in establishing the Water Inspection and Decontamination (WID) protocols which are now used by states throughout the West. Agency staff also are active with the Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species

Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Committee.

Boat owners are reminded to "clean, drain and dry" boats after every use. Boaters should also inspect their trailers and look in hard-to-reach spots on boats and engines for evidence of mussels. Anyone who has used a boat in waters outside of Colorado should tell boat inspectors. Boat owners can also call any state park or wildlife office if they have questions or concerns.

For more information about aquatic nuisance species and CPW's program, visit [cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us).

*Travis Duncan is a public information supervisor for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.*

## Fishing Derby returns with kids in mind

By Joel Evans  
SPECIAL TO THE MONTROSE  
DAILY PRESS

A lot has changed permanently due to the pandemic. Some events missed a year or two, but are on the schedule again. Here comes the 2022 Fishing Derby.

This Saturday, May 21, the Rotary Club of Montrose is sponsoring the annual kids fishing day at Chipeta Lake.

The fishing derby, in its 22nd year, was started by Gene Omernik and

his family. The Omerniks famously operated Jean's Westerner, a local outdoor retailer. Gene wanted to have an event for kids that would coincide with the end of school and the beginning of summer.

Rotary, which focuses on youth, got involved and is now the major sponsor of the event. This event is free, the Rotary Club provides kids a free rod and reel (while supplies last) which kids can keep, and the lake has been stocked with trout by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Cabela's has been added as a sponsor this year.

On Saturday, starting at 9 a.m., volunteers from Rotary, along with the Gunnison Gorge Anglers Trout Unlimited will be on hand to help distribute the gear and teach kids how to fish.

Youth under 16 do not need a fishing license, but adults, if fishing, do require a license. Snacks will be provided.

Chipeta Lake is a City of Montrose park, located on the south side of Montrose off of Chipeta Drive.

## HUNTING

FROM PAGE A11

I was once hunting a farm in Alabama when I discovered the owner's steers had knocked down a section of fence and made their way out onto the county road. I stopped my hunt and reported the situation to the landowner. I forfeited the morning hunt to help him get the cattle back and the fencing repaired. My gesture has assured me of access to his land for many years to come, in fact, we have become close friends since then.

Sometimes sharing, or offering to share, goes a long way. Sometimes a landowner with good fishing ground simply does not have time to fish

and may welcome a few fresh trout for dinner.

Share a few fish from your catch with him and be sure you have properly cleaned or fileted them before presenting them. I used to hunt pheasants regularly on a farm and dropped off a cleaned bird every time I scored, and it was always appreciated by the owners.

Seeking permission is a matter of being polite and accepting the fact that you are going to get a bunch of refusals. Leave all the gates the way you found them, stay on the roads, and don't rut up the roads if they are muddy. In short, be a good steward for the land.

The water board eventually opened up that sec-

tion of river that fed the town reservoir. After it was opened, I don't think Mr. Caster ever fished it again. He said, "It just wasn't the same." And he was probably right.

*Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email [info@mcspi.org](mailto:info@mcspi.org)*



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email them to [editor@montrosepress.com](mailto:editor@montrosepress.com)

## CITIZEN

FROM PAGE A11

If you want to learn more about what other citizen science projects are out there including planets, plants, weather and even ticks, Popular Science has a website for that: <https://tinyurl.com/popscidiy>.

This site provides links for those projects and other resources. So, get out there, have some fun, and do some science!

*Carrie Krickbaum is a board member of the Friends of Youth and Nature — a non-profit that*

*promotes opportunities for youth and families to get outside, experience outdoor activities, and explore nature. Follow our outdoor news blog and receive monthly tips on connecting your children to nature. Learn more, visit [www.friendsofyouthandnature.org](http://www.friendsofyouthandnature.org)*