



My wife’s favorite two outdoor activities are snook fishing and pronghorn hunting. Here she is with a 25-pound snook she caught in the Everglades. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

The outdoors is better with your better half

When my wife and I were first married, we spent every weekend together in the outdoors. Depending on the season, it was always about hunting or fishing. We even went fishing on our honeymoon. We had to, as we were married in May and the hunting season was closed, leaving only fishing.

This arrangement lasted a half-dozen years, and life got in the way. As Zorba the Greek once said, “I’m a man, so I’m married. Wife, children, house — everything. The full catastrophe.”

Fishing, hunting and camping had to take a back seat. Sure, I got to go but the wife had to stay behind and keep the home fires from burning down the house.

As the kids got older, I began taking them along on as many trips as I could. My son really took a shine to fishing, so he was my constant companion on the water. Again, my wife took a back seat to the kids, except for the occasional day trips.

I am always alert for possible marital pitfalls and try to avoid them at all costs. One way to avoid said pitfalls is to include



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

your spouse in your outdoor activities. You will never find a better hunting or fishing buddy than the person you share your life with.

Women have always fallen behind in the outdoor sports, but that seems to be changing. In a 2019 special report on fishing, it was reported that there are 17.7 million female anglers, up 6% from 2015. In 2020, females accounted for 36% of all fishing participants in the U.S.

The statistics for just about all outdoor sports show the participation of women on the rise. For example, 26% of all backpackers are women, compared to 19% just 10 years ago. And 40% of all hikers are women.

In America, around 12.5 million people take part in the hunting sports,

and that number has fallen some in the past 15 years. Surprisingly, the number of female hunters has held steady, and more young girls than ever are hunting.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1.2 million women hunt in America, accounting for around 9% of the hunting population. Hunting used to be a father-son activity, but recently there are more and more dads taking their daughters out to hunt.

In her book *Why Women Hunt*, author and hunter K. J. Houtman conducted interviews with 18 women who hunt, to find their motivations for taking part in the sport. She found one of the common reasons was to fill the freezer with meat for the family. Not just any meat, but healthy meat that has been feeding on natural grasses, leaves, nuts and berries, completely free of chemical additives.

There is some sense to that reasoning. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reported that some 143 drugs, chemicals and pesticides are likely to be found in raw domestic meat and poultry. Of those, 42 are known to

cause cancer, or suspected to cause cancer.

Houtman said, “It goes beyond that for many women. For some it’s a sense of independence that comes from possessing the skills to hunt, the ability to provide food without relying on others.”

Many women grew up in families that fish and hunt, and many are married to a spouse that takes part in the sport. For many of them, life also gets in the way, and they never really seize the opportunity to go, don’t take the time, or in some cases, are never invited to take part. When it comes to learning about the outdoors, hunting or fishing, sometimes a husband is not necessarily the best person to teach the basics, but there is an alternative.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is very proactive in getting women and youth involved in the outdoors, especially hunting. CPW sponsors a program called Hunter Outreach that seeks out people with non-hunting backgrounds. It offers clinics, seminars, advice and educational hunts for novice hunters of all ages.

See WIFE page A12

Riding rivers between seasons

Oh, that relentless wind.

Paddling a fully-loaded double kayak into the fifty mph gusts that had materialized on the Colorado River as predicted last week, I was grateful for the 5 mph current. But still having to work very hard.

There are many ways to enjoy self-propelled travel on rivers. Fast, exciting whitewater traversed in a canoe, kayak, raft, or stand-up paddleboard can be pictured at one end of that spectrum.

On the opposite end, some version of each of the above craft can go drifting with the current. These boaters may choose to watch the canyon walls slip by, lazily. The wild, fast turns are left to the hundreds of cliff swallows swooping from their mud nests which cling beneath the overhanging sandstone along the river.

Most river trips here in western Colorado offer at least a bit of both extreme ends of that spectrum mentioned above.

Can you swim in moving water? Do you have a personal flotation device/PFD (once known as a life jacket) that fits you, and that you are willing to wear? If so, you can set a goal of familiarizing yourself with the knowledge base needed to begin to enjoy rivers of our region this year and next year and the year after that.

Many boaters get their first taste of the delights of river travel by teaming up with a more experienced friend, family, or organization. Each summer the Montrose Recreation Department offers guided rafting trips for youth and families on the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers. This is an excellent way to size up a waterway, while benefiting from the judgment of boaters who already know its challenges and peculiarities.

Paying for a trip with a commercial rafting company is another way to get a sense of a river trip. In addition, the simplest rudiments of how to stay safe on a river can first be taught here.



Outdoors

By John T. Unger

Overconfidence and naivete can potentially cost the life of a boating friend, acquaintance, or family member. What may work well on a flat body of water with no current can often give a false sense of ability and security, which does not usually carry over to the moving water of a river.

Whether tempted to go float on a tire tube or to paddle unknown currents in an open canoe, do not assume that you can just figure it out as you go. While online videos can give some general ideas, and social media group member’s comments can augment experience, they are both poor substitutes for experience on moving water, with cold, cold crosswinds and then hot headwinds, sometimes in the same day.

Foreknowledge is precious. Many self-propelled watercraft exist, and each one handles quite differently than the next one. An inflatable raft with an oar frame requires specific practice in maneuvering and turning it, much different than that required for a two seated open canoe. (For such a canoe, because of the need for no discussion but just quick action in response to commands from one’s partner in the stern of the boat, that double occupancy craft is sometimes jokingly referred to as a “divorce machine”.)

There exist other types of craft which may or may not be fitting for use on some rivers but not others. Decked canoe. Inflatable kayak (“ducky”). Canoe with flotation. Folding kayak, with or without air-filled sponsons. Hardshell kayak. Whitewater kayak. Keel kayak with a rudder. Stand-up paddleboard.

See RIVER page A12

A little knowledge and effort can yield a gorgeous lawn

Sometimes our lawns don’t always look the way we wish they would, and newbies to town are often surprised, or frustrated, by the “somewhat” challenging growing conditions in the area, especially when it comes to growing a gorgeous, healthy lawn. So here are a few tips to help you get your lawn off to a good start.

Watering: Deep and infrequent watering is the key to a beautiful healthy lawn! Watering to a depth of 6 to 9 inches, as infrequently as possible will promote a deep and healthy root system.

An hour or so after watering, use a screwdriver, with a blade approximately 6 to 8 inches long to help you in determining the soil moisture depth. If the blade can be inserted with ease about 6 or 8



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

inches it indicates your turf is moist that far down. Check the turf moisture again in a day or two to see if the soil is becoming dry. You should be able to easily insert the screwdriver into the turf no more than about an inch or two before applying the next irrigation.

The frequency of the irrigation should be based on the condition of the grass, not the number of days since the last watering. Grass that is darker than normal, with



Colorado growing conditions can be a little less than perfect and sometimes our lawns don’t always look the way we wish they would. (Submitted photo/Linda Corwine McIntosh)

a bluish gray cast, or grass that leaves a footprint for longer than a half hour after being walked on is in need of water. Let the condition of your grass be an indication as to when

it is in need of water, as this will vary with weather changes.

The best time to irrigate the lawn, is between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m. Grass is more

susceptible to disease when the blades are wet for a period of more than 14 hours. If you’re watering during early evening hours, keep in mind, grass should be given ample

time for the blades to dry before nightfall. When applying water in the morning, allow dew from the previous night to dry for at least an hour before watering.

I know it may be asking the impossible, but try to avoid watering when the wind is blowing the water off of the intended watering area.

Mowing: Set your mower’s cutting height at 2.5 to 3 inches. Never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a single mowing. There may be occasions when you will need to mow a couple of days apart to avoid removing too much of the blade at once.

Cutting off too much at one time will stress the grass, and create a greater opportunity for insect and disease problems.

See LAWN page A12

Grand Mesa Visitor Center opens for season

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS

The Grand Mesa Visitor Center will open for the summer beginning May 27. The visitor center will be open every day through the last Sunday in September, from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Visitors can purchase maps and recreation passes (annual, senior and access passes). Forest Service fuelwood permits will be available

for the 2022 season. Helpful staff are available during the summer season to answer questions, provide education on the new interactive Google Earth display and the latest interpretive additions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, would like to remind visitors to recreate responsibly when visiting the forest and respect the resource. Don't drive

on wet and muddy side roads creating resource damage, adhere to Forest regulations, demonstrate camping etiquette, be bear aware and practice Leave No Trace principles. For a complete list of campgrounds on the Forest, opening and closing dates, and reservation fees, visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/gmug/recreation> Campers are asked to observe general camping

etiquette including following all posted rules in campgrounds, respecting quiet hours and leaving campsites clean for the next visitor. Seasonal trail and wilderness crews are out and active on the forest clearing trails and beginning to work on summer projects. Visitors can expect to encounter crews working in the vicinity of where they are recreating. If you come across a downed

tree or other issues on a trail, campground or overlook, report it to your local Ranger Station. Leave No Trace principles:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife

- Be considerate of other visitors

For more information about camping and recreation on the Grand Mesa National Forest, call the Grand Valley Ranger District at 970- 263-4100. For information and updates on current fire restrictions, conditions and recreation opportunities on the GMUG visit the forest website, GMUG Fire Info page or www.westslopefire-information.com.

WIFE

FROM PAGE A11

For the ladies who want to learn about hunting and fishing, there is Women Afield, a Hunter Outreach program dedicated to teaching women basic hunting, shooting sport, and angling skills in a comfortable environment. Women Afield offers seminars and clinics to teach the basics in the classroom, on the range, and on mentored hunts with plenty of hands-on experience. More information is available at www.cpw.state.co.us. When the time comes that the kids move out of the house, the husband and wife that shared the outdoors together can really enjoy the time available that was missing all those years. Finally, they can take trips together and do the things outdoors that family obligations prevented in the past. For a couple that grew apart, the empty nest time can be a nightmare. Perhaps a common interest in outdoor activities, like a fishing trip, might help to bridge the gap. For others that maintained the outdoor activity together, even if it was less often, the time can be a golden opportunity. That is where my wife and I are at now. This week marks 45 years we have been married. I am asked all the time by people “why she puts up with you” and I really don't have the answer, except

to say we survived it all together. It was not always easy as she survived all the crazy things I was involved in, from racing offshore powerboats, law enforcement, tournament fishing, running charter fishing businesses and even owning a marina, she has always been supportive and by my side. Now is the time for her to enjoy the outdoors with me, and she is excited. By the close of 2022 we will have hunted or fished on three continents, and we have trips on two more continents booked for 2023. We have saved and planned for these trips for many years but unfortunately, COVID delayed it some. The “full catastrophe” doesn't always have to be bad. Let it be a stepping stone, and not a stumbling block for your relationship, and share the outdoors together. It worked for us. Happy anniversary girl, and here is to 45 more. *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*



After a windy afternoon and a morning with ice on the washwater, Tom Vogenthaler, Ruth Jantzen, Marty Dewey, and Ray Jantzen marvel at the side canyons along Ruby Canyon of the Colorado River last weekend. (Submitted photo/John T. Unger)

RIVER

FROM PAGE A11

Adding more variables to handling and control are forces of nature. Volume of water (measured in cubic feet per second). Speed of current. Temperature of water. Wind speed and direction. Storm forecast. Ability to “read” the water at a distance, from a low angle. Submerged obstacles, perhaps newly deposited

in this spring's runoff. And then there are the partially submerged obstacles of trees and tree limbs. Compound the above with societal variables. Private land versus public land. Access to the river. Open fires allowed or in firepan only or stove only. Human waste rules. Permitted by request, permitted by lottery, or no-permit-needed rivers. Accuracy of judgment

exercised by one's boating companions. Once you have training and begin to accumulate experience, the fun really begins. Colorado is uphill from everywhere. Many of our nation's great rivers begin in our state. From threatening to welcoming, from meditative floating to adrenaline overloading, from wildlife sighting to mid-current fishing, our local rivers offer all of this.

John T. Unger is a Diplomat of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, and in 2022 achieved the credential of Fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine. He is happy to continue learning more about how each river behaves differently from one season to the next and from one year to the next. Your feedback and ideas for future columns are welcomed at www.sportsdocunger.com.

LAWN

FROM PAGE A11

Mowing your grass too short will make the lawn dry quicker, requiring more irrigation. Always keep the mower blade sharp to avoid shredding grass blades, which creates an opportunity for disease to enter. It is beneficial to leave the grass clippings on the lawn. Contrary to popular belief, this will not cause thatch. The beneficial micro-organisms will break it down, while the much needed nutrients are being returned to the soil. Grass clippings are

a wonderful source of nitrogen! However, if you prefer not to leave them on the lawn, they may be used for mulch around your flowers or vegetables, unless 2, 4-D (Weed-be-gone) has recently been applied. Clippings are also great materials to be added to a compost pile. Fertilizing: Nitrogen (the first number on the bag) is generally lacking in our soils. Our soils are usually not lacking potassium or phosphorous. A fall application of nitrogen is by far the most important! If your grass is looking a little peaked and not

growing well you could apply about a pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet now. You may want to apply another pound per 1,000 square feet around Labor Day. Never apply more than about 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in a given year because it's just not needed and can actually cause disease problems. Chelated iron applied along with the nitrogen can also be beneficial. Core Aeration: Core aerating is one of the best things a person can do for their lawn, especially if thatch buildup is a problem. Make sure a machine that pulls cores from the

soil, rather than one that merely punches holes in the soil is used. Punching holes does not open up the soil for good root development, but actually compacts the soil, and creates more problems. Leaving the cores on the grass is beneficial. After a couple of mowings they will break down fairly well, and should not be noticeable. The plugs can be removed, however, if you hate the look of them lying on the grass; rake them up and toss them into the compost pile. Ideally, core aerating should be done in the spring and fall, but it is a lot of hard work!

I know it's hard to think about fall right now, but make yourself a quick note saying, “before I put my hoses away in the fall, or before your ditch water is shut off for the winter, thoroughly soak your lawn, as well as all trees and shrubs.” A deep soaking at that time will give your plants a much-needed drink to help them through the winter. If the winter months turn out to be dry, you may need to water a couple of times. In a typical winter, additional water is usually needed in late February or early March. Apply winter water on a relatively warm

day, after the ground has thawed, yet early enough in the day that the water can soak in before the ground freezes again. I know it seems like a lot of bother, but if you want your lawn to look really great that's how you do it. After all of that, I'm thinking I should write my next article on converting bluegrass lawn areas to low water turf and xeriscape plants. In the meantime, I hope you have a fun and safe Memorial Day weekend! *Linda Corwine McIntosh is a commercial pesticide applicator, ISA-certified arborist and advanced master gardener.*



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