



My friend Denny Saunders got this bison with a bow. Looking at the size of the bison, I am not cure why anyone would want to try and feed him a marshmallow. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

Bison? Better back off

I had finished reading an article about possible new restrictions and safety rules coming out because people are getting injured by bison in the national parks. After reading the report, I commented to my wife that the general gene pool of mankind seems to be low on water these days.

She said, “And this coming from a man who was held back more times in school than he could count.” And she laughed evilly as she hastily exited the room.

I also left the room, not only to escape the prattle of an overly sarcastic spouse, but to further research the apparent upswing in bison attacks over the recent years and report my findings to you.

The American bison is not an animal to be taken lightly. Considering his weight is more than half a ton and he has horns that come to a point sharp enough you can figure taxes with, that you could survive an attack from one to the extent that you could be identified by dental X-rays.

On top of that, the bison probably has an ax to grind with us anyway. Consider that the bison numbered over 50 million when the white man first came to this country. Through commercial hunting, and several other practices, those numbers were reduced to 325 by



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

1884, and that included 24 in Yellowstone.

Start with a bison attack on a woman in South Dakota’s Custer State Park in August of 2020. The woman kept walking closer and closer to a small herd of bison, for whatever reason, until she was picked up and tossed around for several seconds by one of the bison. She left her pants on the bison’s horns as she was later airlifted away for medical attention. There were signs everywhere warning people to keep a safe distance from the animals.

Then there was the Utah couple who were attacked by a bison in Yellowstone National Park back in 2017. The newlyweds saw a bison eating grass in a nearby field. Ignoring warnings about keeping a safe distance, the young couple kept walking closer and closer, for a picture, until the bison had enough, and charged them. By luck, they were

spared serious injury as the horns missed them. Hopefully they learned an important lesson. This couple also walked past a sign warning them to keep a safe distance from the bison.

The papers are full each year about bison attacking someone who tried to get too close for a “Kodak moment” or to try and feed the animals. I read of one woman who was killed as she approached a bison in order to feed it a marshmallow while her husband took a picture. He got a picture, and she got an aromatic pine box.

A 72-year-old woman was gored by a bison in Yellowstone National Park in 2020, after she approached the animal several times, trying to get close for a picture. Witnesses claim she ignored all the warning signs like the bison “making noises and blowing steam out of his nostrils.” They said she was reaching out and trying to pet the animal. She lived, but I seriously doubt she learned anything.

Apparently not all the attacks by bison are because of a blinding act of stupidity on the part of the victim. You always have the moron who wants to hug the animal while their friend snaps a picture, but something seems to be changing the behavior of the animals in recent years.

A 17-year-old Colorado teenager was hiking

with a friend at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota. The pair noticed a small herd of bison, a fair way off the trail. The couple moved to hike past the herd, giving them a wide berth, when one bison attacked. The teen ran away, but the bison struck, goring and tossing the victim into the air. The victim lived but was treated for serious injuries. Investigation showed that the teen did nothing to provoke the animal and was a safe distance from the herd. Apparently not.

Take the case of a 55-year-old man who was jogging down the trail at Antelope Island State Park in Utah, when he was killed by a bison. There were no witnesses to the attack, as he was found by passersby, in the trail. The man was no stranger to the park, having jogged down that same trail many times, and there is no evidence he did anything to provoke the attack.

Antelope Island has experienced three such attacks since 2019, but only 4 since 2013. Yellowstone National Park has a similar number, with three incidents since 2019 and six since 2016. For the time frame of 2000 to 2015, Yellowstone National Park averaged 1.7 attacks annually with no fatalities. Clearly, business is picking up.

See ATTACK page A12

El Morro’s mark on history

Over the last four decades Kathy and I have traveled around much of the Colorado Plateau. But there is one area we had not visited – west-central New Mexico. It is a landscape of forested cuervas, recent volcanic activity, and the home of several ancient Pueblo villages.

We visited the Acoma Pueblo, known as the “Sky City,” and El Malpais National Monument. The village lays claim to be the longest continuously inhabited village in North America dating back as early as AD 1100. El Malpais, Spanish for badlands, is a landscape of lava flows, lava tubes and cinder cones.

Another stop on our trip was El Morro National Monument. The monument was a keen interest of mine because of its historic significance. The name originated from a prominent rock formation that dominates the landscape. El Morro is a Spanish word meaning headland, a promontory.

The promontory is along an ancient trail between the Zuni and Acoma pueblos. At the base of the cliffs is a deep pool of water. The pool provided a welcome stop for travelers in a dry, dusty landscape. Also at the base of the cliffs are inscriptions carved in the rock that go back over 400 years.

El Morro enters the historical record in 1583 when Antonio de Espejo recorded his stop at the pool. The first governor of New Mexico, Don Juan de Ornate left his “paso por aqui” in 1605, the first of scores of Spaniards leaving their mark.

The Spanish were not the first to recognize the worth of El Morro. The remains of two large Ancestral Puebloan villages sit atop the cuesta that forms cliffs. Petroglyphs are interspersed among the inscriptions. The villages date to the late 13th



Outdoors

By Bill Harris

and early 14th centuries. The Zuni people consider these ancient villages as sacred and a testament to their ancient heritage.

The first U.S. citizens to leave their mark at El Morro were Lt. James Simpson and Richard Kern in September 1849. Simpson and Kern were part of a military reconnaissance led by Col. J.M. Washington. They, along with Richard’s brother Edward were charged with creating a survey, mapping the country through which the detachment traveled.

I became familiar with these historical figures during my study of settling of the American Southwest, in particular the early military expeditions into Navajo country. Back in 2013

I was part of a team of researchers documenting historic inscriptions on the Navajo Reservation.

Many of the inscriptions were made by military personnel.

Simpson, commissioned by the Army Corps of Topographic Engineers, kept an in-depth journal of the Navaho Expedition. The Kern brothers produced detailed, accurate maps of the landscape and were talented artists. They were the first non-indigenous individuals to record the remains of the Chacoan Culture. Their skilled observations gave the world some of its first views of an ancient landscape and the people who inhabited it.

See HISTORY page A12



El Morro. (Bill Harris/Special to the MDP)



10 SOUTH SELIG AVE MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401 970-249-4226



Subscribe to the Montrose Press for a chance to win a fully stocked chest freezer!*

Simply purchase a new annual subscription, renew your annual subscription or convert your subscription to EZ Pay.

CHEST FREEZER COURTESY OF



MEAT PRODUCTS COURTESY OF



Two easy ways to enter!
Either subscribe at montrosepress.com or call 970-249-3444



Terms and conditions apply* Each new subscription, renewed subscription purchased or EZ Pay conversion between October 12th to November 30th will receive one entry per subscription. A winner will be drawn on December 2nd. No purchase necessary to win. For your free entry you must stop by our office at 3684 N. Townsend Ave to register. *Meat will be fresh when picked up.

ATTACK

FROM PAGE A11

Perhaps it is the number of visitors these parks are seeing. The annual number of visitors has almost doubled during the last decade. The number of bison in each park has increased over the same time period, but not by a large percentage.

I guess the moral of the story is to take off the headphones, put the cell phone in your pocket, and use a telephoto lens on your camera. Stay aware of these animals and keep your distance, farther away than you think is safe.

Lastly, don't do anything stupid when it comes to wild animals. Keep a safe distance and don't feed them, just like all the warning signs tell you. The woods, with a half-ton animal in front of you is not the place to find out the rudiments of Murphy's Law.

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

HISTORY

FROM PAGE A11

Richard and Edward along with their brother, Benjamin were educated, adventuresome citizens from Pennsylvania who lent their knowledge and skills to the early exploration of the West. By 1848 the Kern brothers found themselves in Taos, New Mexico. They joined John Fremont's ill-fated expedition into the San Juan Mountains of Colorado.

Benjamin and Fremont's guide, Old Bill Williams, were killed on a return trip to Colorado in the spring of 1849, attempting to retrieve valuable instruments left behind during their hasty retreat from Colorado after the Fremont expedition fell apart.

Later that year in August, Edward and Richard befriended Simpson who immediately recognized their artistic and mapping skills and enlisted their services for the Navaho Expedition. The mapping crew functioned somewhat independently of the main military force.

By late August Col. Washington's command was deep into Navajo country. He had parlayed with the Navajos and during one of their meetings an argument ensued about a stolen horse. During the fracas Narbona, an esteemed Navajo elder, was shot and killed.

The incident incited the Navajos and led to several military expeditions in an attempt to pacify the Navajos. By 1864 9,000 Navajos had been rounded up and relocated to Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico, with over 500 dying on what the Navajos call "The Long Walk."

After the Washington expedition the Kern brothers worked with Lt. Simpson and others to map much of the Southwest. In 1853 Richard accompanied Captain John Gunnison on an expedition into Colorado and Utah. He was killed along with Gunnison in a Ute raid on their camp. Edward ended up sailing to the Far East in one of the early American expeditions to Japan.

History fascinates me, especially that of the American Southwest. A good read that does an in-depth job of telling part of that story is "Blood and Thunder," written by Hampton Sides.

Bill Harris has traveled the back country of the Colorado Plateau since 1976 and is author of "Bicycling the Uncompahgre Plateau."



Amaryllis may be one of the easiest and most impressive flowers you'll ever grow, but they need to be started soon. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the MDP)

It's time to get amaryllis growing for the holidays

Is it just me, or does it seem like Christmas keeps arriving in the stores earlier and earlier every year? Anyway, I wonder if you've noticed the amaryllis bulbs for sale. This may actually be a good thing because it's time to get them growing in time for Christmas.

I know it may be hard to think about getting ready for Christmas when it's not even Thanksgiving yet, but like all bulbs, it takes them a while before they will bloom. So you'll need to start them soon if you want to grow one from a bulb and have it blooming in time for Christmas.

I think Amaryllis may be one of the easiest and most impressive flowers you'll ever grow! Their huge, trumpet-shaped blossoms often measure up to 8 inches across and they come in amazing colors.

Even better, they come in a variety of colors such as burgundy, red, white, variegated red and white, peach and pinks so they can fit into any decor. Apparently the Greeks thought they were pretty great flowers because the name Amaryllis actually means to sparkle in Greek.

But just in case you're not familiar with amaryllis, let me explain what we're talking about. Amaryllis are usually considered a showy Christmas houseplant that is grown from a large bulb. Unlike tulips and daffodils, amaryllis are tender bulbs so you don't plant them outside or they'll freeze. In their native areas, like South Africa, they bloom outdoors in spring or summer, but around here they're commonly "forced" into early bloom for the holidays.

The size of the bulb will usually determine the size of the flowers so if you want a large showy bloom display you should invest in a quality bulb. If you really don't care about the bloom size and number of flowers it produces, you can



Gardening from A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

purchase rather inexpensive smaller bulbs. With that said, there are a few varieties that naturally produce smaller bulbs but it should state that when you purchase it.

Here's the tricky part. It's hard to know exactly when an amaryllis will flower. Some varieties tend to bloom sooner than others. So you might want to buy a couple of bulbs and start them at different times if you want to make sure you have one blooming for say, your Christmas party.

However, all of the flowers on the stalk don't usually bloom at the same time, which actually extends the blooming time. For the most part though, bulbs will take about six to eight weeks before they bloom. So count the number of weeks until you want the bulb to bloom.

If you're buying an individual bulb, rather than one in a kit, you might want to choose a heavier pot that won't tip over due to the height of the flowers. Your pot should only be about one inch wider than the bulb and have a hole in the bottom for water to drain. But you're not limited to just one bulb per pot. Several bulbs can be planted in one container. Just keep them about an inch apart from each other.

When you're planting the bulb use a high-quality sterile potting soil. Just moisten the soil, fill the pot a little more

than half full and set the bulb on top and add a little more soil.

It may sound strange but you should leave the top 1/3 of the bulb sticking out of the soil. That's all there is to it. Then place your planted bulb in a warm room with temperatures around 70 degrees. Sunlight isn't needed until the plant begins to grow. At that time it should be moved to a bright location but not placed in direct sun.

Water it sparingly until the flower bud appears. After this, keep the soil moist but not saturated.

Rotate the pot occasionally to keep the plant growing straight instead of leaning toward the sunlight. Try not to move the plant to a new location after the buds appear or it may drop the buds. Once it has bloomed you'll be OK moving it.

Also, if you keep your flowering bulb away from direct sunlight it will probably bloom for about a month. Amaryllis can make a dramatic statement as a cut flower, so if you want to add some to your flower arrangement, there's no reason not to. They'll last as long as any other cut flower.

If you want to try to get your plant to bloom year after year, once it finishes blooming, cut the flower stem (not the leaves) to within an inch of the bulb. This will help the bulb store energy.

Give the plant plenty of bright light to help it build up its reserves and water like you do the rest of your houseplants. Grow your amaryllis indoors all winter and into the spring.

After danger of frost, you can move it outside for the summer. Fertilize the plant once or twice a month to keep the leaves lush and green. The soil should be kept barely moist. In late summer or early fall, stop watering it and move the potted bulb to a cool (55 degrees), dry location, away from bright

light. A basement or garage is ideal.

The leaves will gradually wither and fall away as it goes dormant. Leave the bulb alone and don't water it. After your amaryllis has rested for a couple of months, you can start it again.

There's no rush, so if you have several bulbs you may want to start them at different times. If the bulb is too crowded, repot it using fresh potting soil. Water it once and move the pot into a warm 60-65 degree room. Water sparingly until the bulb is actively growing.

You'll discover the bulbs reproduce by growing "daughter" bulbs next to the "mother" bulb. It will take three to five years for a daughter bulb to reach a mature size, so be patient. The daughter bulbs can be separated and planted when you start the bulb again for the holidays. A cared for amaryllis plant can easily live for 75 years! (I hope my kids will want my bulbs.)

I think a lot of people must think amaryllis are pretty great Christmas plants because the U.S. imports more than 10 million amaryllis bulbs every year. Most of these come from Holland or South Africa. With that said, be aware that amaryllis are considered poisonous to pets. If ingested, pets may vomit, appear depressed, or show signs of a painful abdomen and a loss of appetite so keep them out of reach from your pets as well as small children.

With more than 600 named varieties of amaryllis I bet you can find one that will be a perfect fit for your Christmas decor. You know what? I think this has put me in the mood for Christmas. Is it too early to start wishing for a white Christmas?

Linda Corwine McIntosh is an ISA certified arborist, commercial pesticide applicator and advanced master gardener.