



This is an adult javelina. Note the collar around his neck. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

# The javelina is no mere hog



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I was in what my wife and I laughingly call my office, when the phone rang, waking me out of a sound sleep. Reluctantly, I answered, expecting it to be a call from someone who was going to renew all my expired car warranties for me in exchange for copious amounts of cash. Instead, it was my hunting buddy, who can sometimes be worse than a telemarketer. This time however, it was a good thing he called. He had an idea for a hunting trip for us. Since I am always up for another hunting trip, he had no problem selling me on the idea. The plan was for us to put into the license draw, in Arizona, for a javelina hunt to take place in February. The month of February is a rough time anyway. The fishing season is months away and last year's hunting is but a distant memory. The Arizona Game Department sets several javelina hunts, archery, muzzleloader, and rifle, for different dates during the month of February. Most folks, including our own Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) consider javelina to be nothing but a glorified feral hog, but they could not be further from the truth. Other than looking somewhat similar, having hooves, and both being considered invasive, they are miles apart in the animal kingdom.

Javelina are known by several names such as, collared peccary, skunk pig, *Tayassu tajacu*, or for you scientific types, *Dicotyles tajacu*. Although they resemble pigs, javelina are members of the peccary family, a New World species and native to the Western Hemisphere. The pigs, on the other hand, are an Old World species that were introduced to North America from Europe during the exploration days. There are four types of peccaries found in North, South, and Central America, only the collared peccary has made Arizona, and occasionally Colorado, home. The collared peccary was undoubtedly given this name because of the "white collar" found at the junction of the head and body. Normally, an adult javelina will stand 24 inches tall and tip the scales near 50 pounds. Individuals with herds that live near agricultural areas, or subdivisions with lots of green landscaping and gardens, can get as large as 85 pounds, if they are not on a keto diet. Javelina have normal hearing but very poor eyesight. What they lack in eyesight, they make up for with an incredible sense of smell. With their long snout and large pig-like nose, they can identify other herd mates as well as detect danger, at great distances. The javelina is a very social animal, living in herds numbering from four to 20 members. They communicate with each other using a variety of grunts and growls, and sometimes make a popping noise with their jaws and teeth. A scent gland, about the size of a dime, is located on their lower back. This gland emits a very pungent scent that helps

to identify members of the herd. When startled or frightened, the javelina can emit their scent in a megadose of this scent (probably where the nickname skunk pig comes from) and flare their hair to make them appear larger before making a mad dash out of the area. There are always battles for dominance amongst members of the herd, and the battle scars can be seen as evidence of the sharp tusks the javelina carry in their mouth. It is easy to see what a local herd of javelina has been feeding on because they are extremely messy eaters. They will root up plants, to access the roots, tear apart prickly pear cactus pads, leaving the shreds behind, and destroy your garden and plush landscape, if the mood hits them. If you are looking for a javelina, and find a shredded landscape, you are probably in the right area. Javelina are nighttime operators, often raiding campsites and residential areas in search of easy pickings for a snack, while we sleep. In the morning, you can find evidence in your yard they were there. Normally, javelina are in the dry, desert floor areas, all the way up to 7,000 feet in elevation. The typical habitat would include riverbed washes, a rolling terrain, brush and cactus, and a nearby source of water. A normal herd will generally stay on a home range of about a square mile. Individual javelina live an average of 10 years in the wild although there have been documented cases of them reaching 20, and all those years will be spent in that general home range unless pushed out by an outside force.

See HOG page A11

# A mass start on Grand Mesa



## Outdoors

By John T. Unger

Fifty-six sleek-suited athletes gathered from the U.S. Air Force Academy, Western Colorado University, University of Wyoming, Colorado Mesa University, Denver University, Colorado College, and Colorado State University. On a 12-degree morning at 10,600 feet elevation in 25 mph winds, they donned their skate skis to do warm-ups for the race at Skyway on Grand Mesa. These skiers in their teens and twenties were joined at the same starting line by another casually clad 45 citizens from Montrose to Steamboat. Overall, nearly one out of every five skiers were in their 60s or 70s. This freestyle cross-country ski race last Sunday exemplified how well competitiveness and camaraderie can mesh during a single athletic event. The term "freestyle" here represents the fact that this particular race in the Grand Mesa Nordic Council's race series permits the use of classic, kick-and-glide, track skiing, as well as the typically faster, lighter, skate skiing done on its specialized skis, boots, and poles. During a mass start, skiers self-selected their appropriate starting places. In the minutes before the start signal for the entire field of racers, the wind chill in the open at that starting site compelled most every athlete to be jumping, hopping, and swinging their arms, before at last strapping the poles onto their hands. At the shout of "On

your marks, get set, GO!" 101 skiers lunged forward. That number, of course, represented 202 skis, and 202 more ski poles, all of which were constantly and rapidly moving forward and back, under the influence of the adrenaline that accompanies a mass start in any racing event. I can say that, at that moment, the excitement there included the always unanticipated combination of thrill, caution, and crowd energy. It brought to my mind the very similar memory of being among racers in starting lines in other sporting events. A few notable differences existed, though. I once stood shoulder to shoulder with 799 other people in swimsuits on the edge of a large lake for a half-ironman triathlon mass start. I recall the rather urgent awareness of needing to avoid getting kicked in the head or face, as we all sprinted into the water and did the crawl stroke for a mile. Whereas, standing among over a thousand other trail runners on Main Street in Ouray for the mass start of the Imogene Pass Run every year, my thoughts are always on hopes to not get tripped up by others, but also to not get stuck behind a much slower runner in that first quarter mile on the asphalt, before the group naturally begins to spread out. And of course during a mass start in a bicycle race, unfortunate events can occur at a surprisingly high speed, surprisingly soon. At the Skyway race on the Grand Mesa, being my very first race on skate skis, I seeded myself at the back of the pack (after I had shot the accompanying photo of the mass start). So, while the trail was still in the open and had not yet entered the dense tall trees, it took a sweeping turn to the right. That blessed me with an inspiring view of dozens of the front-runners slightly spreading out in almost single-file, going

full tilt up that open slope. It greatly resembled the videos of the 2022 Winter Olympic nordic ski events, except that this was happening live. It was made even more impressive by being a long, unbroken shot, uninterrupted by any cutting from one camera shot to the next, which so much reduces the appreciation of the high speeds of these self-propelled skiers. While visiting with other competitors after the race, it turns out that those ahead of me in the middle of the pack had experienced a sudden tangle of fallen skiers and then a crowded bottleneck, after one skier had fallen ahead of them. Unnerving and yet adding to the excitement for all of them, at least no injuries had occurred. The impressively broad range of ages and abilities of skiers in each race of the Grand Mesa Nordic Council series (gmnc.org) makes it inviting for any skiers of intermediate ability or higher to consider joining in. And now even closer to home we also have Montrose's newly opened trails of the Uncompahgre Nordic Association for cross-country ski training and just plain fun. These are just over twenty miles southwest of downtown, at the intersection of Dave Wood Road and the Divide Road. I can attest to how wonderful these 12 km (8 miles) of local trails are. They are wonderful whether you are training for the next race on Grand Mesa, or, more likely, just out to enjoy this wonderful winter of ours in western Colorado. John T. Unger is a Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, and in 2022 achieved the credential of Fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine. He cannot help but want to get faster on skate skis and to ski more weekends. Your feedback and ideas for future columns are welcomed at [www.sportsdocunger.com](http://www.sportsdocunger.com).



More than 100 ski racers from seven university teams and many towns across Colorado sprinted into the annual Skyway Skuffle 10km race last Sunday. (John Unger/Special to the MDP)



Subscribe or renew by February 7th for a chance to win a dozen roses and a \$100 gift card for a local restaurant.

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

### TWO EASY WAYS TO ENTER!

Either subscribe at [montrosepress.com](http://montrosepress.com) or call 970-249-3444

Roses donated by



MONTROSE PRESS

Terms and conditions apply\* Each new subscription, renewed subscription or EZ Pay conversion between January 12th to February 7th will receive one entry per subscription. A winner will be drawn on February 9th. No purchase necessary to win. For your free entry you must stop by the Montrose Press office at 3684 N. Townsend Ave to register.



# Houseplants and the leafy love affair



## Gardening from A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

I have to admit, the last time I was in one of the big box stores and saw all the fantastic artificial plants, I was a bit drawn in by them. But I came to my senses and thought, wait! What am I thinking? Why do I have houseplants in the first place?

My plants are so much more than a piece of furniture. Sure, houseplants can help purify the air and add a feeling of relaxation and interest to a room, but some of my plants are so much more than that. I especially love my fragrant and blooming plants at this drab, cold, time of year.

Just the other night I woke up because I smelled something so sweet. I laid there for quite a while trying to figure out what I was smelling, then I realized the intoxicating fragrance was my pink jasmine (*Jasminum*) that blooms every winter at about this time. I fell back to sleep thinking how lucky we are to have something so delightful that can grow right in our home.

Unfortunately my husband wasn't as thrilled with the fragrance as I was. I could tell that right off when he began to repeatedly sneeze. So I moved

the plant downstairs and placed it near the back door. That was actually a great place for it because every time I come in the door I get a fragrant whiff of jasmine and it doesn't bother his allergies now. Wouldn't you agree that's so much nicer than an artificial plant or some type of room spray or plug in?

I also have little orange and lime plants that have an unbelievably sweet aroma when they bloom. And better yet, they produce little oranges and limes. These guys usually bloom in the summer so I get small winter fruit. However, both of them have flower buds now so I'll get a burst of fragrance about the time my jasmine is finished blooming and hopefully more little fruit. I love it!

My night blooming (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*) is my Ugly Duckling plant. This plant is also referred to as Queen of the Night Cereus or Jungle Cactus. It's kind of spindly with rather unattractive leaves. So I usually keep it in a back room when it's not blooming and put it outside in a protected shady area of the deck during the summer months.

Once a year it decides to reward me for my efforts with the most unusual, amazing, and fragrant flowers that you can imagine. When it blooms even my husband marvels at it and lets it stay in a prime location.

I also have a Hoya *Camosa* (sometimes referred to as wax plant) that blooms about once a year. This plant likes indirect bright light conditions or it won't bloom. There are



This night-blooming cereus may be considered the “Ugly Duckling” of houseplants. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the MDP)

quite a few varieties of Hoyas but they all have thick leaves that trail down the pot making them a good plant for a hanging basket. They can also be placed in an area where you might need a plant hanging down.

When the small clusters of waxy star shaped flowers bloom it puts out a powerful, unusual scent. The flowers are as unusual as the scent, looking like little upside-down umbrellas. I think they're great but one of my daughters isn't quite so sure about the fragrance.

I have a night-blooming jasmine (*Cestrum*) that a friend gave me and it's one of my favorite plants! This is a plant that I just can't

get enough of when it's blooming! As you probably guessed by the name, it blooms in the evening and through the night for a few weeks during the summer.

This plant not only smells fantastic when it's blooming but it's pretty much resistant to disease and pests. People say it's the perfect plant for people with brown thumbs. Just don't let it get too dry. It will wilt to tell you it needs to be watered.

*Stephanotis* is another great flowering plant. *Stephanotis floribunda* are also known as Madagascar jasmine or bridal veil or bridal bouquet because they are, or were, often used in bridal bouquets. (I can't keep up with that.)

The little white flowers aren't only pretty, but they have an almost perfume aroma.

It's a bit surprising that it's actually a member of the milkweed family. The foliage is a vine that grows three to four feet tall when grown indoors. It prefers bright, cool, conditions and isn't difficult to grow.

Of course I have to mention gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*). This is a tropical broadleaf evergreen shrub, but is typically grown as a large, indoor houseplant. People seem to either love or hate the aroma of this plant, probably because it can be pretty strong. To keep the white flower buds from

dropping, grow it in a bright cool location.

I know you can overdo it with too many aromatic plants in an area. So if you choose wisely you can get flowering plants that don't bloom all at once. Just think, you could have a naturally great smelling home for quite a few consecutive months.

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, a great smelling flowering plant might be the perfect gift to say Happy Valentine's Day for years to come. Hopefully it will become a flowering love affair.

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

## HOG

FROM PAGE A10

The tusks and teeth of javelina have been rumored to contain gold deposits. Stories have spread about folks finding a crust on their teeth that appears like gold, possibly from rooting around in the gold rich soils of the desert areas in which they live. I researched this and found it to be not gold.

According to Gerald Day, author of the book *Javelina: Research and Management in Arizona*, “Javelina teeth become coated with a “gold-like” substance. The teeth have an accumulation of calculus or tartar that is deposited gradually by the reaction of saliva with food items. On some teeth, the tartar forms a thick hard shell that can be chipped off in large flakes and has the colors of gold, iridescent or brown. Skulls

with gold-colored teeth make interesting conversation pieces but you do not have any value in the bullion market.”

So much for striking it rich while out hunting.

Javelina can be aggressive, especially when they live in suburban areas with human populations. Herds that travel with a dozen or more members can inflict serious, or even fatal wounds on humans and pets, especially when cornered. Because of their poor eyesight, javelina when escaping a potential threat may seem as if they are charging you, but they just aren't able to see you as they barrel through the brush.

I have a friend who recently saw five javelina off U.S. 550, north of Ouray. Another report told of javelina on the bend near Tuffy's Corner, near the Uncompahgre River. With global

warming bringing milder winters, I suspect we will see more javelina in our area.

Here is to hoping my buddy and I draw a tag for javelina in Arizona. I have seen javelina, but never had the opportunity to hunt them. Occasionally, my hunting buddy comes up with a good idea.

*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*

# GMUG seeks comments on Alta Lakes improvements

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests' Norwood Ranger District is seeking public comment on a proposal to continue site improvements at the Alta Lakes Recreation Area.

Located in a high-alpine basin approximately 13 miles south of Telluride, Colorado in San Miguel County, the project area includes Alta Lakes, Gold King Basin, Wild Boy Lake and National Forest System Road #632 — Alta Lakes Road.

The purpose of this proposal is to address present and future impacts from recreation. The proposed improvements will reduce natu-

ral resource degradation by managing visitor impacts and sanitation issues.

Proposed site improvements include, the construction of two dispersed camping loops and day-use parking areas, vault restrooms, trail and road improvements, visitor sign enhancement and riparian habitat restoration.

“The combination of significant year-after-year increases in visitation has created a situation that under our current management strategy is not sustainable,” said Norwood District Ranger Megan Eno.

“Our goal is to maximize recreation opportunities while minimizing unwanted

impacts to the sensitive, high-alpine environment surrounding the Alta Lakes Recreation Area.”

For detailed information on the proposed site improvements visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63429>. Public comments must be received by March 2.

**Comments may be:**

Mailed or hand delivered to: Norwood Ranger District, Attn: Megan Eno, P.O. Box 388, Norwood, CO 81423

• Emailed to: Megan.Eno@usda.gov

• Faxed to: 970-327-4854, Attn: Megan Eno

• Oral comments can be provided by calling the Norwood Ranger District at 970-327-4261.

*Information from news release.*



# Select Snowshoes on Clearance!

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