

## Waterproofing boots



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



Whatever your chosen outdoor activity, having your boots somewhat waterproof is always important. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

A buddy of mine called my office, thereby waking me out of a sound sleep, to ask, “What is the best way to waterproof hiking boots?”

The question took me back because it has been a number of years since I actually used a waterproofing treatment on a pair of boots. In recent years, I have had problems with waterproofing a backpack. They all seem to leak in one place or another. Footwear is an altogether different problem.

Fishing waders come directly to mind. Every pair I have ever borrowed or owned has leaked. Small cuts and tears are usually repaired easily with a rubber patch, similar to what we fix tire innertubes with. Problem is, I usually do not discover the tear until cold water is rushing into the boot at a terminal velocity measured in foot pounds, too late for a patch.

The other area of contention, not limited to waders, is the fact that they leak from the big hole at the top, you know, the one you put your foot in. Invariably, the depth of water is always universally 2 inches deeper than the exact top of my footwear. It matters not the type of footwear; the water is always deeper. Science ought to look into that.

Just about all hiking boots are factory treated with a water repellent finish of some type. I have not seen a new boot that required treatment out of the box. You will notice that water, like the dew in the grass, will bead up and roll off the surface of the boot, letting you know the repellent is working. When the beading up stops, the finish is wearing off and it is time to do something about it.

Waterproofing treatments are generally designed for leather. There are 2 types of leather, rough leather like suede, and full grain which is smooth. Be sure to buy the treatment for the type of leather on your pair of boots.

Wax based waterproofing is not as popular

as it once was. In the past, we always used the original Sno-Seal Beeswax waterproofing, and it still works as one of the best today. Another choice that works well is Obenauf’s Heavy Duty LP Leather. Either of these will work well on full grain leather but know that you will have to reapply often, depending on how much you use the boots.

Suede boots are another story. The spray on water repellent is the best way to get some waterproofing, although it does not last very long, sometimes a day or two. Gear Aid Revivex or Scotchgard have worked for me but be aware they can make the suede a bit darker after application. I have not found suede to be a good material in wet, snowy or muddy conditions.

As a side note, you should have a couple bottles of the spray on water proofer for regular use. Usually, they are made from a chemical compound, the main ingredient sometimes being silicone, that when sprayed onto a material, acts like an additional protective layer. It seals the pores that would normally allow water in.

I mentioned before, it does not last a long time, depending how much you use the item and how much moisture it is exposed to. You can spray down your pack, paying special attention to the zippers, and it really helps keep your stuff inside dry. It will fend off a moderate rain or a snow but will not survive a dunk in the lake. I spray shoes, boots, packs, gun cases, and just about everything else, before the trip.

The best all-around system for waterproof boots and dry feet is Gore-Tex. Gore-Tex is a membrane made of pores that are 20,000 times smaller than a droplet of water, thereby preventing water from entering the boot. This same membrane is used on clothing, bags, packs, jackets, hats, and just about any fabric you want waterproof.

The membrane is very thin, measuring .01mm in thickness. It is bonded to other materials and fabrics to create the waterproof layer that water simply cannot penetrate, unless the membrane is torn or otherwise damaged.

The Gore-Tex membrane will eventually wear out with use, especially the heavy use we put our equipment through in the outdoors. Many people prefer leather boots with a Gore-Tex lining because when the membrane wears out, you can still waterproof the leather.

To prolong the life of your Gore-Tex, you should never wear cotton socks in the boots, as cotton gets abrasive when wet, such as with perspiration. A wet sock can easily wear out the boot inside to the point of damaging the membrane.

Another important step is to keep the inside of your footwear clear of all dirt and debris. Anything like sand, small twigs or pebbles can damage the membrane lining. Keep the outside of the boots clean also because sand and other small debris can work its way down to the membrane eventually. Wash them down and allow them to dry thoroughly dry between uses.

See **BOOTS** page A11

## The quail’s call to belong



### Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

The Old Spanish Trail (an early 1800s route for commerce from Santa Fe to Los Angeles) had been in use for some 10 years when William Gambel, a teenager from Philadelphia, made the trek in 1841. Everything was new to the youthful naturalist, from the vast open terrain to the many species he encountered. After he reached the coast, he wrote his mentor, Thomas Nuttall of his cataloging work in finding four species that were new to science.

Hiking the Sunset Rocks Trail I’m listening for the mournful kawwww of one of those species, Gambel’s quail (*Callipepla gambelii*). Snow covers much of the adobe hills of the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area this February. Gambel would have found the bird on parts of the trail in southwest Utah and along the stretch near the lower Colorado River.

The quail in our neck of the woods descended from birds that were introduced to western Colorado by hunting clubs early in the 1900s. The introduction expanded the species into new areas as they took to Western Slope valleys. The territory of very few animals grew in the 1900s, yet quail have come to belong to the wild landscape here.

It’s cold; cold enough to see my breath. I imagine seeing the sentry bird perched on a branch, its call descending from a high pitch to a lower note. Maybe I could see

its breath wafting out. The cascading song is a message to the colony of birds (sometimes numbering up to 100 or more in winter) that the coast is clear for feeding.

It appears that they don’t have abundant feathers to fluff and keep warm. The top knot plumes on their heads bob as they strut. Biologists suggest it is used for display during courtship. It seems like a burden, but they get along. The birds deal with icy winter weather in part with their aftershafts (down-like tufts at the base of each feather), which add to the insulation that their regular feathers provide. They scurry about in the brush on bare feet. Gazing at the adobes I wonder, they have little insulation, face frigid temperatures, and have limited shelter. This must be why there are no nudist colonies out here.

Gambel’s quail are at the northern most part of their range. To make the most of their winter landscape, they have adjusted to the conditions. With a secure call from their sentry, a covey can move out to forage for seeds. Their energy needs have increased by 25% at this time of year.

If seeds (or bugs) are unavailable, they will resort to leaves and forbs. Their small intestine and ceca, the latter is similar to our large intestine, will elongate to extract the most nutrition from the low energy vegetation.

These birds do a lot of walking with their short legs. Research suggests they spend about half of their day trotting the terrain. It makes sense that the activity level helps them keep warm, but an Arizona State University study shows that a strutting quail does not use more energy in cold weather, than when it is simply hanging out and hunkered down.

From dawn to dusk

quail devote almost 80% of their time striding along and foraging. They can move up to 2.2 miles a day.

Out among the juniper trees and within the sheltered folds of the adobe hills, the wind is stilled. I strain to hear the sentry’s song; a song for them to feel right. The winter sun has quieted everything. I sit among the lonely junipers. . . waiting. No sounds to be gathered . . . silence.

Along with the shelter of plants and landforms, the birds will covey-up. They form a tight circle, heads facing out, tails pushed in, one bird fluffed up snug against the others on each side. Such a ring enhances the collective body heat. In this way they belong to each other.

Farm fields and moderately wild neighborhoods near towns also provide cover for coveys that will soon be on the move as February and March give way to spring. Listeners straining to hear the sentry’s solo might also hear it at the east end of Oak Grove and Kinikin Roads.

I’ve listened to the quail’s ballad for many years, knowing that all is well. It’s a call of fitting in, of adjusting to our landscape and knowing that the earth is youthful and alive, even in winter.

Peace reigns on the Sunset Rocks Trail. It must be time for me to return to the noise of town. But the quail’s song reminds me that their belonging is our belonging. That we are part of the world whether we just discovered it or have known it from the beginning.

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Colors on the Sunset Rocks Trail in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area stand out in the adobe hills on the east side of the Uncompahgre Valley. The adobes, or the geologic name of Mancos shale, are prevalent in this part of the valley. (Courtesy photo)



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# Yes! There is gardening to do in February



## Gardening from A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

A lot of migratory song birds are returning to the area and I think I can actually feel a little bit of spring in the air on some days; and then all of a sudden snow hits and it turns into winter again. This is why savvy gardeners know not to get too excited and begin gardening too early.

But that doesn't mean you have to just sit and look out of the window with big crocodile tears in your eyes. Here are some things you can be doing right now.

Since there's still some cold weather ahead, don't get too anxious about spring cleanup and start removing the winter mulch from around shrubs and perennials. They'll appreciate the mulch blanket keeping them warm on a cold night. The mulch will also help hold the moisture in the soil and keep the plant from repeatedly freezing and thawing, which can push it up above the soil line. If the mulch has blown away from around your plants I'm sure they would appreciate your help restoring their blanket again.

A lot of beneficial insects overwinter in and on shrubs and perennials. If you cut them back too early in the season you'll be destroying their winter home. So don't get too anxious.

With the high prices of groceries, more and more people are rediscovering the almost lost art of vegetable gardening. There's definitely a learning curve to gardening in our area though, and it can be tricky gardening in our high altitude and less

than perfect soil. So don't expect to toss some seeds out and produce a super garden.

Some vegetables, like broccoli, cabbage, or cauliflower prefer growing in cooler weather. These plants can be bought at almost any garden center in the early spring, but if you want to grow them from seeds, it's time to get started.

Seeds of most warm season plants, like tomatoes and peppers, should be started about six to eight weeks before our last killing frost date, which is approximately May 12 for the Montrose area. So you'll want to wait to start those seeds.

Vegetable transplants should be between five and seven weeks old when you plant them in the garden, so count backwards on your calendar from the time you want to plant them in the garden to the day you plan to start the seeds. If you want lush, full, baskets of flowers early in the season, or plan to set your plants out early and protect them from the cold, you may want to start those seeds a little sooner. Petunias are slow to get growing, so if you want lush baskets of flowers you'll need to get those started.

If you've never tried starting seeds indoors before, it's really not too difficult. Here are a few easy steps to get you growing.

First, choose a good seed starting mix. Don't use your garden soil! Pick the proper container. Seeds can be started in a variety of containers, as long as the one you choose has drainage and is clean and sterilized.

Fill the container with soil, leaving at least a quarter-inch of space at the top. Moisten the soil before sowing the seeds. Sow your seeds as directed on the package and cover them with a fine layer of soil. As a general rule, don't cover seeds with soil more than four times the diameter of the seed.

Gently water the seeds after planting. Cover the seeds with a grow kit lid



This is the time of year to remove pinon trees that were attacked by Ips beetles last season. They should be removed from the area before the beetles emerge and daytime temperatures rise above 60 degrees for a period. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the MDP)

or clear plastic wrap. This will hold in humidity and help the seeds germinate. Remove the cover when you see new green growth.

You may want to write the sowing date down for future reference. Most seeds germinate at room temperature or temperatures around 65 degrees. However, planting heat pads (available at garden centers or online) will improve germination and I think they're a worthwhile investment.

Once the seeds have sprouted they require approximately 14 to 16 hours of sunlight per day to become strong, healthy plants. In most cases, placing the plants on a sunny south or east-facing windowsill may provide sufficient light.

However, grow lights have gotten so inexpensive and easy to use that they're definitely worth checking out. These should be placed about 2 inches above the plants or as close as you can get them, and raised as the plants grow. Insufficient light, cold temperature, overwatering, or using contaminated soil or pots can cause "damping off disease" in your new little plants.

Changing the subject a bit, a lot of people are concerned about beetles in their trees, and perhaps

rightly so. The first thing to know about beetles is that there are different types of beetles that attack particular trees. For example, Ips beetles attack primarily pinon trees.

As drought conditions intensify, beetle populations grow. Because most trees in our landscapes have irrigation provided to them, they aren't attacked as frequently as pions growing in the local drought-stressed pinon juniper forest. I strongly recommend removing any pinon trees that died last summer or fall!

This is because the beetles will emerge from the dead tree and attack other trees once daytime temperatures hover around 60 degrees for a few consecutive days. Freshly cut trees will attract beetles to the area, so removing them and disposing of the infested trees now will get rid of any beetles that may emerge from the tree and prevent new attacks coming from the problem tree. Sprays can be applied to the trunk and large branches of the tree to deter beetle attacks.

The dreaded emerald ash borer hasn't been causing problems in the Montrose area yet. I know it's only a matter of time before they become a huge local problem but so far so good.

This is a great time to begin pruning trees, with the exception of maple, birch and walnut trees. Those trees are best pruned in July to avoid ugly sap discoloration of the tree. Also, avoid pruning fruit trees right before a heavy frost.

It's still a little early to apply dormant oil to trees and shrubs. But let me just say, if you have a problem with aphids, scale, or mites, especially on your fruit trees, spraying them with dormant oil before the leaves pop out will help control them. Most of today's oils are made from refined petroleum (mineral) oil and work by smothering any overwintering insects or their eggs.

Be sure to thoroughly coat the entire tree or plant when spraying. The oils can stain wood and some painted surfaces so use caution or cover things if needed. As always, read the entire label before applying any pesticide and follow the directions.

There's been a lot of talk about turf grass replacement programs that may be coming to a neighborhood near you. This has made some people, who really hadn't given much thought about saving water in the landscape, get pretty excited. I plan

to address this issue in the near future. But for now, don't do anything that could produce unintended consequences.

I know the idea of saving water sounds good but keep in mind, most tree roots of established trees will extend two to three times further out than the height of the tree. Should you decide to get rid of your turf and put down something like say, black plastic and rock in place of turf, you may have just sentenced your tree to a slow, painful death. An established tree is not going to be one bit happy about having the water and air that it grew to depend on suddenly gone.

Buffalo grass is a drought-tolerant grass that many are turning to as an alternative for Kentucky bluegrass. There are different cultivars of this grass which I'll cover in upcoming articles.

For now, I say do your homework on the topic and don't do anything rash. Your local CSU Extension office has quite a bit of material available on this topic which could help. I'm certain there will be a lot of discussion on this topic.

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

## Cause of Meeker calf deaths undetermined

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

A Colorado Parks and Wildlife investigation that began on U.S. Forest Service land near Meeker in October 2022 has concluded. CPW investigators could not determine the exact cause of death for a few calves with hide damage and trauma consistent with a canine attack.

Discovery of a pack of nine dogs harassing wildlife seven miles from the livestock incident cast doubt on whether wolves were in

the area. CPW is working with the Rio Blanco County Sheriff's office on a call-by-call basis and will deal with any domestic dog issues according to legal processes.

"Although a few cattle showed wounds consistent with injuries from large canines, further investigation to collect additional evidence has yielded no confirmation of wolves in the area," said CPW Northwest Region Manager Travis Black.

"Based on the hide damage and muscle trauma to

the animals, we believe these few cattle were likely killed, or injured and died later, by some species of canine larger than coyotes," Black said, "but we do not have specific evidence to determine what species of canid caused the depredations. The 90-day window allowed for producers to provide proof of loss has expired, so the investigation is being closed."

The owner of the livestock, Lenny Klinglesmith, agreed and praised the agency for its thorough investigation.

"The Klinglesmith family would like to thank the local DWMs and veterinary staff for the many hours spent in the field and in the office investigating this incident," Klinglesmith said.

Due to lack of evidence of wolves in the area, Klinglesmith will not be further pursuing compensation.

The livestock producer and livestock veterinarians continue to investigate potential health components and mitigation efforts beyond the initial report of depredation.

## BOOTS

FROM PAGE A10

A good set of hiking boots can be an expensive investment. Honor those boots by taking good care of them and keeping them well maintained and cleaned. Eventually, totally wear them out by enjoying them outdoors, using them for what they were designed to do' carry you and your equipment up and down mountains, across creeks, and through swampy woods. And if you ever figure out how to keep water from pouring in through the big opening at the top

of the laces, short of staying the heck out of streams, give me a call.

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



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