



We always have to be careful with the food we eat, especially when we are camping and the conditions are less than optimum. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

The desert bighorn sheep of Western Colorado



Outdoors

By Bill Harris

One of the perks of living in western Colorado is being able to view an abundance of wildlife. Whether in our beautiful valley, along the Uncompahgre River, the Black Canyon, the high country or the secluded canyons of the Uncompahgre Plateau, wildlife can be found. The large mammals such as mule deer, pronghorn, elk, bear, and bighorn sheep seem to attract the most attention.

I certainly enjoy seeing all of the above, but as anyone who follows this column knows, birds of all sorts are high on my list of watchable wildlife. I rarely pass up a chance to go looking for a rare or unusual bird that shows up in west-central Colorado.

This year I am expanding my avian wanderings to the whole state of Colorado. Right now, my Colorado bird sightings stand at 126 species, 93 in Montrose County alone. I have several visits planned around the state to look for birds that are not usually seen in western Colorado. My goal: 275 species.

Before I go down that rabbit hole too far, let me circle around and get back on track — wildlife viewing of the non-avian type. A few weeks ago, Kathy and I spent an afternoon driving through Escalante Canyon, west of Delta. We have visited this scenic wonder for many years.

We tend to go in the wintertime. Less traffic and the chances of seeing desert bighorn sheep is very good. Desert bighorn sheep congregate along Escalante Creek and the canyon's agriculture fields during the winter. We have seen as many as 20 sheep in a herd.

Desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) are denizens of the canyon country of western Colorado. Thanks to prehistoric petroglyphs we know that bighorns have inhabited much of the desert southwest for millennia. A close cousin, Rocky Mountain Bighorns are found in the high country.

The lower canyon below the potholes is a bit of a banana belt. The Escalante Cattle Ranch has its headquarters in the lower canyon with wintering cattle in several fields. The day was sunny, a rarity this winter. The road was bumpy, but passable. As we drove by the old Huffington place near the Dry Fork confluence we spotted a large flock of wild turkeys, another critter regularly seen in the canyon.

See SHEEP page A12

Food safety while camping



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

As a youngster, I was able to eat just about anything without consequences. Cake, cookies, candy and just about anything else that wasn't properly secured from sight was fair game for this kid. I ate chocolate chip cookies like Nabisco wanted the box back.

This propensity carried on into my adult years, well after I was married. There were never any leftovers at our house, not with the human landfill around.

Ah, but it was not to last. Soon the food went directly to my waistline, and the rest is history. I assume all of us have been there.

With my youthful ability to eat anything that was not nailed down, I never paid much attention to "proper food storage," or if food was heated up enough before serving. Never, that is, until that one time when it finally happened — and it happened on a camping trip.

My cousin was 10 years older than me and that meant he knew everything, or at least everything worth knowing. He would profess this knowledge freely and liberally, whenever we were together, and I had best listen or else get a rap in the head.

I was particularly attentive, not for fear that he would hit me, but

because he had the most important thing in an outdoor kid's world: a car. A car meant we could go camping, hunting and fishing. And we did.

One camping trip, my cousin brought along hot dogs for me to cook up and eat. I should have been suspicious, as there were only three left in the pack. I should have been more suspicious in that he did not eat any of them.

Well, I ate the hot dogs, and you guessed it, food poisoning. I spent the next 12 hours watching those hot dogs make the most violent re-entry into society imaginable. I did not die, but sure thought I would.

Later, I found out he kept the package in the freezer, thawing at regular intervals to remove one or two from the package, then refreezing the rest. Apparently, in my cousin's vast wealth of knowledge, food storage and care were not listed.

See FOOD page A12

Finally getting out in the garden?

I bet you'll agree that this has been one crazy spring, or maybe that it's been one long, persistent winter. Either way you look at it, I think we're all grateful for the moisture, but more than ready to get growing.

In previous years, a lot of us have been out in the landscape enjoying some early spring gardening for about a month now. But, so far this year my gardening experiences have been limited to basically going out and looking with great expectations for a little tulip or crocus tip to poke out of the cold, wet soil in hopes that some sign of spring really is here.

I don't know if this is a good thing or not, but a couple of weeks ago I actually saw a little baby (first instar)



Gardening From A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

grasshopper on top of the snow. How crazy was that? It made me wonder what this spring and summer have in store for us. Grasshoppers typically don't do well when the weather is cold and damp. Maybe no one told him that. For the most part,

the cold, wet weather has slowed things down a bit for a lot of insects and trees.

I know some people are becoming concerned that the cold weather is going to hurt the trees. I'm thinking they should be OK if the temperatures continue to be cold.

Trees experience more problems when temperatures fluctuate and it gets very warm and suddenly drops again. This is why it's difficult to grow fruit trees on the Front Range. They have a history of reaching 70 degrees or better one day and then a front comes through and it's freezing again. This can affect a variety of trees, but fruit trees just don't tolerate that well.

See GARDEN page A12



Gardening this spring has been challenging, but the first signs of spring are happening. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the MDP)



40% OFF
ENTIRE STOCK OF
NORDIC SKIS
Skate • Classic
Backcountry

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

FOOD

FROM PAGE A11

I was kind of shocked to learn there were over 250 different kinds of food poisoning, and that there are 48 million cases annually in the United States. Of those cases, 128,000 result in hospitalization, and 3,000 people take the last train west due to a food poisoning.

Most cases of food poisoning or food borne illnesses resolve themselves within 24 hours, although it can be a miserable 24 hours. The symptoms are generally nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. If a fever is present, along with body aches, you may start to suspect norovirus or something worse, and seek the advice of your doctor.

It is one thing to get sick from something as violent as this at home, but it can be a nightmare when you are on the road, or in the wilds on a camping trip. At home, where you have your bed and bathroom is one thing. In a tent, on the side of a mountain, is another. The cure? Prevention.

Start by using camp foods that are easiest and safest to store. Cold foods must be kept cold in order to avoid microbes and other organisms to develop that spoil food. When in doubt, throw it out, as I should have done with the hot dogs.

Use a good cooler or a camping refrigerator. Frozen water bottles instead of ice packs reduce storage needs and keeps everything cold. As the food supply goes down, you use the thawed water bottles up. It is a great

way to help maximize storage space.

We all want meat in camp, especially steaks and chicken, but once they are thawed, they can become contaminated and cannot be refrozen (again, the hot dogs).

Remember that proper storage means meats and other perishables must be kept below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If they get above that, they can't be reliably cooked enough to make them safe. In other words, you would be gambling in a game you don't want to lose.

Cook everything to proper temperatures. My wife is always checking foods with her little thermometer, and I am glad about that because she keeps me healthy, even when we are camping.

Ground beef, pork, lamb and veal should temp out at 160 degrees F, while poultry should reach at least 165 degrees F. Non-ground beef, pork, lamb and veal should be at least 145 degrees F, but higher is better. For the record, hot dogs should be 165 degrees F.

Cross contamination is something you really must prevent. You can easily transfer the parasite from a surface directly to the food. Wash hands and utensils every time you touch or handle food and never move from one to another. As always, wash your hands always, before, during and after.

Wash all utensils and containers. Try to limit each utensil to a single container and/or food item. Just as you wash your hands at every juncture, also wash utensils that move from one tray to another or one food to another.

Leftovers have probably made more people sick while camping than anything else. Food stored at temperature between 40 degrees and 140 degrees F are at the highest risk of developing a bacterium. Try and plan the meal so there is nothing leftover. If I am along, that is usually not a problem.

The last area of concern is drinking water. Never drink water in the wild without filtering, as with a LifeStraw or similar system, or boiling. The purification pills will work in a pinch. For planned trips, it is just much safer to bring water from home.

My cousin is a regular reader of my column, so Cuz, if you are wondering if I am still upset over the hot dog incident, no. But next time, I have some special fish filets I have been saving for you.

For my afternoon snack, I have been saving a couple slices of pizza. I like pizza cold, but I have to sneak it without my wife seeing me.

Uh oh, I hear her coming with her little thermometer. I better eat this on the run.

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



A Bighorn ram in Escalante Canyon. (Bill Harris/Special to the MDP)

SHEEP

FROM PAGE A11

Soon we drove past the historic Walker Cabin. The stone house was built in 1911 and has recently been restored by Colorado Preservation Inc. It's worth a stop to check out the building and read the interpretive sign.

Once past the cabin signs of civilization dwindle. A quarter mile past the cabin we encountered a large herd of bighorns along the creek nibbling on willows and grassy tufts.

There were three handsome rams alongside the ewes. Two of the rams had full-curl horns. Several of the ewes appeared to be wide in the beam, suggesting they were pregnant. The bighorns did not seem bothered by our presence, and slowly wandered up-canyon out of sight.

GARDEN

FROM PAGE A11

If the cold weather hits when fruit trees are budding or flowering it can cause frost damage and result in the loss of the crop. Let's hope that won't be the case!

I'm sure the abundance of spring moisture, plus warm weather and sunshine, will definitely equal weeds; — and plenty of them! A pre-emergent herbicide will help control summer annual weeds that haven't emerged yet, but it won't do anything for the hard-to-kill perennial weeds or weeds that are already up and growing.

A lot of elbow grease or herbicides labeled for controlling broadleaf weeds and grasses will be needed to control the green growing weeds.

Be very careful if you're using a glyphosate product like Round Up. There are so many variations of this product that you could easily use the wrong one. Some are made to control grass and you can replant shortly after using it. Some will kill broadleaf weeds and not the grass. Other varieties have a broadleaf weed killer or a pre-emergent added, so read the label before you buy it, or any product for that matter.

If you would rather use organic herbicides there are quite a few products to choose from. Acetic acid, citric acid, citrus oil, clove oil or clove leaf oil, cinnamon oil, lemon grass oil all come premixed and labeled for weed control. These products work by killing the top portion of the weed so you will need to reapply them because the weed will continue to grow back until it finally runs out of energy.

Please use acetic acid with extreme care! Just because it's organic doesn't mean that it's completely safe. While household vinegar that contains 5% acetic acid

is relative safe to use, it's not very effective when used for weed control. The 20% that's sold for weed control can burn your skin, eyes, and even be hard on your lungs. So be aware.

I'm getting anxious to clean up my flowerbeds so I can enjoy my bulbs when they finally appear. The stalks from last summer's perennials can be sheared off with your hedge trimmers or hand pruners. If you have a chipper, your clippings could be run through it and added to your compost pile.

If you're cutting back your ornamental grass, using an electric or gas powered hedge trimmer makes quick and easy work of an otherwise daunting task. You could wrap rope or bungee cord tightly around tall grass clumps if you don't want to rake up a bunch of grass blades. Cut straight across the base of the grass as low as possible and gather up the bundle for disposal.

While you have those hedge trimmers out, why not prune your junipers, Russian sage, potentilla and old spent flowers from spirea. Barberries can also be shaped with your trimmers if you like a manicured appearance. You'll want to avoid pruning the flowers off of spring blooming shrubs such as lilacs and snowball bushes. You can revive old lilacs or dogwoods by removing the older, dark colored canes at ground level.

While you're getting things looking great for spring, you could remove any of last year's fallen leaves from around the base of your trees, shrubs and perennials. If powdery mildew was a problem last fall, removing the fallen leaves will help to keep the mildew spores from re-infesting the shrubs. I know the fallen leaves from last autumn are compacted, wet and hard to deal with right now, but with a few nice days and

I have seen bighorns in the red rock canyon country of the Uncompahgre Plateau from Roubideau Canyon to Mee Canyon. They seem to be doing well, especially in the wildest, most rugged terrain where they have limited human contact.

Desert bighorns seem to be thriving in the wilderness areas of the Dominguez-Escalante and McInnis Canyons national conservation areas, and the Colorado National Monument. Those places have an abundance of natural terrain well-suited for the needs of bighorns. For me they are emblematic of a wildness that is becoming less common but deserves protection.

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

warmer temperatures they will become manageable in no time.

If you have plants that tend to fall over when the flowers become prolific, put supports in place while the plant is young. Supporting plants such as peonies while they're still small will help to conceal the supports as the plant grows.

I know everyone loves to see green grass in the spring, but power raking and early fertilizing is not recommended. Power raking is hard on your lawn! Core aerating is a far better way to deal with thatch.

If you fertilized your lawn last fall, you don't need to fertilize it again early spring. In fact, early spring fertilization can actually cause problems in the lawn.

If you have asparagus, fertilizing it with a little nitrogen as soon as you see new growth emerge will give it the boost it needs. Fertilizing it again in mid-summer, or after you're done harvesting it, will give it a good boost for next year's harvest. If you don't have asparagus, I recommend planting some of the purple varieties. It's really good!

If your soil is still muddy or somewhat waterlogged, try to avoid walking on it. Your gardening tasks will wait until the soil dries out a bit. Walking on the wet soil will compact it, which isn't a good thing.

Whatever you choose to do in your garden, take your time and enjoy doing it. After all, working in the garden while getting a little exercise and some fresh air is all a part of the joy of gardening. Yet, the true rewards come when things bloom or you're harvesting your yummy home grown veggies or sitting back and enjoying your beautiful landscape.

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







STICKING DOORS



BOWED WALLS



DRYWALL CRACKS

EASY FINANCING OFFER!

NO

PAYMENTS

INTEREST

(*if paid in full within 12 months)

*Subject to credit approval. Interest is billed during the promotional period, but all interest is waived if the purchase amount is paid in full within 12 months. Cannot be combined with any other offers, offer expires 3/31/23.

YOUR EXPERTS IN

FOUNDATION REPAIR

BASEMENT WATERPROOFING

CRAWL SPACE REPAIR

CONCRETE LIFTING

OVER 60 YEARS OF COMBINED SERVICE



Call for a FREE INSPECTION

(970) 875-6052